Petrarch vs. Gherardo:
A case of sibling rivalry inside and outside the cloister

Rodney John Lokaj

Ph.D. University of Edinburgh, 2001

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Abstract

This thesis analyses the relationship between Petrarch and his brother, the Carthusian monk, Gherardo, as described in the *De otio religioso* and the *Rerum familiarium libri*. I take Petrarch and his brother as literary constructs representative, respectively, of early humanistic poetics and traditional asceticism. This new methodological approach integrates certain areas of critical endeavour which have traditionally remained excluded from main-stream Petrarch studies.

My reading of the *De otio* inverts current interpretations inasmuch as it sees the work not as praise of 'pre-humanistic monasticism', but rather as a denunciation of Carthusian *otium*. Such intellectual inertia does not lead the monks back to God but turns them into instruments of the devil. Petrarch tries to rectify this stance by teaching the Carthusians about *otium litteratum* (*imitatio*, classical learning which 'spices' Christian learning, *callidae iuncturae*, etc) and by challenging the validity of certain values (eg. the Carthusian definition of religion, happiness, etc.).

My reading of the *Familiares* presents the sub-group concerning Gherardo (called the 'gerardine' letters or cycle) as yet another way of rectifying the situation. I interpret the Ventoux letter (*Fam.*, IV 1) as both a cryptic allegorisation of Gherardo's initial position, and a fictitious, anachronistic anticipation or summary of the aims of the gerardine sub-group. That is, in the Ventoux letter Gherardo is excluded from Petrarch's direct reading of St Augustine. The gerardine cycle then constitutes an *accessus ad Augustinum* whereby Petrarch teaches his brother about poetics, law, history, philosophy and theology. The *accessus* ends with the *Familiaris* XVIII 5 accompanying a copy of the *Confessions*. That is, the gerardine cycle closes when Gherardo is ready to read Augustine for himself. The gerardine cycle thus affords a glimpse into the structural strategies used by Petrarch in his *Familiares*.

The general model emerging from the entire thesis is that of the humanist outside the cloister who paradoxically teaches the monk inside the cloister how to reach God. Seeing that the Petrarchan road to God is at the basis of his poetics and Weltanschauung, the 'lessons' which Petrarch sends to Gherardo can, therefore, help us better understand some of the more obscure areas well beyond the works specifically analysed.

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Introduction and preliminary considerations

Most modern critics believe that Francesco Petrarch (1304-1374) always yearned to follow his younger brother, Gherardo (1307-after 1374), into the cloister. Gherardo, in fact, became a Carthusian monk in 1342 and was transferred the following year to a small Charterhouse in Montrieux, Provence. Petrarch's 'failure' to enter the cloister was supposedly due to a lack of courage or weakness of will. In line with Billanovich, Feo and Dotti, it is my hypothesis that Petrarch did in fact see his brother as a model, or better, as an example of a particular life choice which contemporary fourteenth-century society still held as the most suitable for escaping the clutches of the devil, and for reaching God. It is also my hypothesis, however, that Petrarch saw this life choice, compared to his own, in a negative light. Through the works analysed in this thesis, namely, the *De otio religioso* and a sub-group of *Familiares*, I shall demonstrate how Petrarch adduces the contrast with his brother as an opportunity to address the issue of the role of humanistic learning in the search for God. Indeed, my methodology is in line with Constable[1] who identified this same sub-group of *Familiares*, together with the *De otio*, as the most demonstrative of Petrarch's views concerning monasticism and traditional spirituality.

As I shall point out in my analysis of the *Familiares*, both Francesco and Gherardo Petracchi had received an education, had indulged in vernacular poetry writing, and had even been to university. The reasons for their abandoning formal, institutionalised study were contingent and primarily a question of costly university fees. Both through lack of money and the tumultuous situation in Bologna itself, Francesco and Gherardo had started university in the academic year 1320-1321, but

[1] Constable 1980, pp.68-70.

had had to stop altogether in the April of 1326.[2] Formal study, as Petrarch never failed to point out, was not, however, the problem. The problem lay in the fact that Gherardo, upon taking his vows and entering the cloister, had given up every effort to improve his poetry and his intellectual capabilities. In trying to reverse the situation, through the works which I am about to analyse, Petrarch establishes a "road to salvation" which is peculiarly and intimately already humanistic. The contrast between the two brothers thus becomes one of the humanist from outside the cloister who teaches the cloistered monk how to find God.

In the *De remediis*, which I do not specifically analyse here, Petrarch writes about brothers. Discord between brothers is a "grave sed antiquum malum"[3] which makes one's brother "odiosus".[4] The case in which there might not be such discord is "rarum".[5] When told that someone's brothers are "optimi", Petrarch answers, "Miror plane. Bonos esse sat est; sepe enim mali sunt [...] peiores hostibus".[6] One only has to look at the disastrous effects of brotherhood in the plight of the Atrides in Mycenae, in the case of Eteocles and Polynices in Thebes, Romulus and Remus in Rome and Cain and Abel.[7]

It emerges from my analysis of the *De otio* and the *Familiares* that the opposition between Francesco Petrarca and his brother Gherardo is influenced by such foundation or re-foundation myths. In such (re)foundation, there is the consequent elimination of at least one of the two brothers. In the works analysed, however, Petrarch primarily draws from the Hebrew-Christian world. The founding story of the people of Israel, for example, seen in the contrast between another set

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[2] For Petrarch in the tumultuous years spent at the *Studium Bononiense*, Wilkins 1964, pp. 20-21.
[3] *De rem.*, 45 *De discordi fratre*, 2.
[4] *ibid.*, 7-8, "D. Odiosum fratrem habeo ac discordem. R. Ut ferme nullus amor equior fraterno, sic nullum, ubi inceperit, iniquius odium, nulla acrior invidia".
[5] *ibid.*, 84 *De fratribus bonis piisque sororibus ac formosis*, 2.
[6] *ibid.*, 4.
[7] *ibid.*, "Quantus autem sit amor fratrum, ne latentes eruam neu presentes ledam, satis notissima paria Mycenei Thebanique fratres ac Romani indicant; qui quidem infamia cur unius urbis potius quam

of 'siblings', Abraham and Lot, is at the basis of Petrarch's account of the re-founding of Montrieux. Yet another contrast, that between two sisters, Mary and Martha, seems to be the most important, that is, the contrast between the two New Testament *figurae* which were seen as allegorical representations of the contemporary conceptions of *vita contemplativa* and *vita activa*. Indeed, in the Middle Ages, it is well documented that Mary and Martha constituted a model for such opposition not only between female siblings, but also, and perhaps above all, between male siblings.[8] I shall demonstrate how Petrarch resolves this particular case of sibling rivalry by the fusion of the two in him[9] and the complete exclusion-elimination of Gherardo. The only classical source explicitly used by Petrarch in the context of sibling rivalry is, as I shall discuss in the chapter on the *Familiares*, the famous fraternal contrast between Byblis and Caunus. As it is decribed by Ovid in the *Metamorphoses*, this contrast is the etiological account regarding instances of rites of foundation and division of peoples in Asia Minor in classical times. It is this classical contrast which perhaps best describes the inner mechanisms of the contrast between Petrarch, the writer of letters, and Gherardo, his reluctant addressee.

An integral characteristic of such models, as Quinones points out for Dante's *Comedy*,[10] is that one brother should kill another in some way. As far as Francesco and Gherardo are concerned, obviously this does not happen in a physical sense. Indeed, in several works, as I shall also discuss below, it is possible to glean that Petrarch will never stop loving his brother. Gherardo, after all, is the addressee of the warm and melancholic *Senilis* XV 5, sent around the end of 1371,

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totius orbis sit non video. Primos mundi fratres aspice".

[8] Constable 1995, pp.4-5.

[9] Such a fusion would place Petrarch on the same level as the Virgin Mary who was thought to combine the virtues of both sisters (see Constable 1995, p.8 and, in particular, p. 19 where Constable discusses St Augustine's 3rd way of life [*civ.* XIX,19] as "ex utroque conpositus"). It would be interesting to see this fact in relation to the *Canzone alla Vergine* in the *RVF* 366.

[10] Quinones, 1994, p.2.

in which Petrarch wishes there were a Carthusian monastery near Arquà in which Gherardo might live so that the two brothers could see each other again before Petrarch's death.[11] On 4 April 1370 Petrarch had written out his last will and testament in which Gherardo, though the last person mentioned, is one of the main beneficiaries. Such elimination, therefore, is not absolute. It serves a literary and ideological purpose in the middle years of Petrarch's life, a period in which he wrote most of his religious works.[12] The use of Gherardo as an anti-model against which he might have posterity compare the model he constitutes is part of a technique which recent Italian criticism (not necessarily related to Petrarch studies) calls 'autoschediasma'. This rhetorical technique re-arranges one's past for literary and/or ideological reasons.[13] The 'middle years' I refer to are in the period characterised by Petrarch's *Divortium* from the Colonna family, Avignon and Provence and his final move back to Italy in 1353. That is, as his own "parable of existence"[14] as a middle-aged man, Petrarch 'kills' his younger brother as an integral part of his attempt to put an end to his life in Provence.

And just as Quinones points out, such foundation sacrifice of a brother by the hand of another takes place in concomitance with the idea of pilgrimage.[15] Indeed, Petrarch will spend the next and last twenty years of his life wandering around Italy and Europe more than he had ever done before. His wanderings, however, are never termed as a *gyrovagari*, which, in the Benedictine monastic tradition had a negative connotation,[16] but rather as a *peregrinari*. In other words,

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[11] Cf. Dotti, 1992, p.417.
[12] Cf. Constable, 1980, pp.58-59.
[13] For example, Petrarch states that he has witnessed the translation of the body of St Anthony of Padua even though he was not in Padua at the time; he models (or invents) his falling into the Arno as a baby in the light of Camilla's *gestae*. Cf. Lokaj 2000d & Lokaj 2000f. We shall see in Chapter Three that Petrarch's devotion to Mary Magdalene is probably confined to his later years, but he wants to present it as if he had been devoted to her *before* Gherardo enters Montrieux in 1343.
[14] Quinones, 1994, p.2.
[15] *ibid.*, p.4.
[16] Cf. Constable, *Opposition*, 1979, p.130.

Petrarch the eternal pilgrim exalts his status as a constant *peregrinus in exilio*.[17] His status, therefore, drastically contrasts with Gherardo's who is forced by both the Carthusian *Consuetudines* and the general Benedictine aversion to pilgrimage (whereby the pilgrim can even be party to the work of the Devil) to embark upon a *peregrinatio in stabilitate* towards humility and patience without ever leaving the monastic *desertum*.[18] Above and beyond the real restrictions placed upon Gherardo by his status as a Carthusian *clericus redditus*, according to Petrarch, Gherardo's life choice is static and effectively fruitless, whereas his own is dynamic and fruitful.

In the course of this thesis, the analysis undertaken of the *De otio religioso* will explore the presence of alternative models to the one offered by Gherardo and western monasticism. The 'Lucretian' model results from a philological analysis of the second book of the *De otio*. It would seem that the last section of Book III of *De rerum natura* influences this part of the *De otio* both lexically and philosophically. This is the section that deals with the torments of the classical Hades. By 'philosophical influence' I refer to Petrarch's attempt to re-address cherished fallacies and institutions of contemporary fourteenth-century life. I draw two basic parallels: 1) between the Lucretian denunciation of classical *religio* and Petrarch's denunciation of inert, brainwashing monasticism; 2) between *felicitas* and scientific endeavour. My overall appraisal, therefore, of the *De otio* as a protreptic work sent to Gherardo and his Carthusian brethren in a bid to provoke a philosophical response, is in open contrast with the current critical position (Cochin, Rotondi, Mazzotta, Constable, etc). Indeed, I canot agree with Constable that Petrarch "found

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[17] Analogous, therefore, to Peter Damiani's *spiritualis exsilii iter*, cf. Peter Damiani, Letter 7.17, *PL*, 144, 456AB, cit. in Constable, *Opposition*, 1979, p.132.

[18] Constable, *Monachisme*, 1979, pp.16, 23, 24, 27. See also Constable, *Opposition*, 1979, pp.132, 140, 142 *et passim*, & Constable 1995, p.68 where he discusses Guigo's *Scala claustralium* II [*PL*, XL, 1003] and Rachel and Mary as the supreme models for life as a hermit.

nothing to criticise in the monks and monasteries of his time".[19] Petrarch may not have been as explicit as Boccaccio in his exposé of the discrepancy between relgious ideals and practices, but this makes him no less critical.

In the very short second chapter, I explore the possibility that Salimbene's account of Gherardo Segalelli may have influenced Petrarch's views regarding his brother's life choice. In the third chapter I remain in a broadly Franciscan sphere of influence when I analyse the possible 'Mary Magdalene' model in Petrarch.

I analyse the *Familiares* as a literary work and not merely as a collection of letters, as has normally been the case (Fracassetti, Rossi, Dotti). In my analysis of the *Familiaris* IV 1, I shall demonstrate the emergence of an implicit role model, the stigmatised "poverello" from Assisi, St Francis. Through my analysis of the *Familiares* in the sub-group presented, it will also become clear that Petrarch creates a literary, philosophical and poetical *accessus ad auctorem*, where the *auctor* is St Augustine, so that Gherardo might learn more about St Augustine and Petrarchan-style conversion.

It is true that fifteenth- and sixteenth-century humanists will, at times, be profoundly worried about the contrast between their own *studia humanitatis*, on the one hand, and the Christian letters, on the other, as if the two disciplines were somehow implicitly incompatible. I shall demonstrate that this supposed incompatibility and worry had already been analysed and overcome by Petrarch in the middle of the fourteenth century. It is my basic contention that the anthropological, psychological and literary forms Petrarch adopts to address these same issues ultimately derive from the ways in which he deals with the contrast with his younger brother. In other words, through the fraternal contrast between the sons of ser Petracco, I explore the founding spirit and concerns of early humanism.

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[19] Constable, 1980, p.60.

Chapter One

De otio religioso

Gherardo's status

The *De otio religioso* is a long letter apparently written and dated by Petrarch after his first visit of a day and a night to the Monastery of Montrieux in the April of 1347. It was to this monastery that his brother, Gherardo, had been sent as a Carthusian *clericus redditus* after his acceptance into the Order in the April of 1342. Given the mention of major natural catastrophes and political events alluded to in the *De otio*, it seems plausible to date the work at least ten years later, that is, towards 1357.[20] In fact, the *De otio* was developed further, probably with the addition of the second book, after Petrarch's second visit to Montrieux in 1353.[21] Even though the *Annales Carthusienses* record that the *De otio* was sent to the Grande Chartreuse, Rotondi is not sure whether it was sent to any Carthusian settlement at all.[22]

Being a *clericus redditus* meant that Gherardo had agreed to live in obedience, chastity and without any personal possessions. As *clericus redditus* he could not become *conversus* but he could wear the habit, the cowl, the tunic and the sandals of the *conversi* and regular monks without a shirt or trousers. Later the *clerici redditi* would be dressed completely like the *conversi* but without a beard. A bull of Gregory IX promoted the *redditi* to the same level as the *oblati* of other orders. The *redditi* could also become deacons, in which case they were considered above the *conversi* and could, as such, be admitted, together with the monks, into the choir, the chapter and the refectory. In Gherardo's time the *clerici redditi* could even sit with the monks, though always behind them. The *clerici redditi* were the

[20] Rotondi, 1958, pp.XIII-XIV.
[21] Cf. Cochin, 1975, pp. 156-157.
[22] Rotondi, 1949, pp.154-155.

only members of the monastic community who were allowed to carry out minor duties for the community beyond the *terminus* defining the *desertum* necessary for Carthusian hermetism.[23] With the authorisation of the General Chapter or of the Prior of the Great Charterhouse, the *clerici redditi* could exceptionally be admitted into the priesthood, but could only wear the hood without sacerdotal fillets. They could not be called *Domini*, but only *fratres*. Indeed, it is the polysemy of the term *fraternitas* which will become pivotal in Petrarch's relationship with his brother.

The aforementioned prescriptions concerning form were rigidly kept. Indeed, the Carthusian order is still famous today for the rigid observance of its exact and severe regularity. Even the Council of Trent (1545-1563) saw no reason to intervene in its organisation because it had never altered since its beginning: *Religio Cartusianorum numquam reformata, quia numquam deformata.* Such rigidity was even codified in its motto: *Stat crux dum volvitur orbis*.[24] The rigidity governing Gherardo's status was, therefore, characteristic of the Order itself. It specifically aimed at differentiating between those who were theologically prepared and those who were not. Clearly, Gherardo was not sufficiently prepared for any higher status.[25] This condition, for Gherardo the former university student, promising poet and brother of Europe's leading intellectual, must have annoyed and worried Petrarch. It is this same condition which Petrarch seeks to rectify with the *De otio* and the *Familiares*.

The status of the *De otio*

One of the few scholars to analyse *De otio* defined it as "un des plus beaux [*scil.* traités] sans doute que le moyen âge ait laissés à la louange de la vie monastique".

[23] Merati, 2000, p.6.
[24] King, 1955, p.6.

The same scholar, however, also added that the work was "un peu négligé [...] mais oeuvre curieuse et originale aussi."[26] The *De otio* has also been just as neglected by successive criticism. Indeed, no complete critical analysis of it has ever been written. The dearth of critical works on the *De otio* can be explained in two ways. In the first place, the dichotomy which Petrarch establishes at the beginning of the work between himself and Gherardo (Petrarch = sinner vs Gherardo = angel/busy bee of the Lord) gives the impression that the work is nothing but banal, uninspired praise of monastic life, a poorer copy or uninspired corollary, as it were, of the thesis contained in the *De vita solitaria*. Indeed, Bishop terms the work as "very tiresome".[27] In the second place, the *De otio* was written in a particularly unusual, un-Petrarchan, modest style. Let us briefly consider these two reasons.

A laudatory work?

The apparently clear-cut dichotomy between the two brothers (sinner-angel) has characterised modern scholarship concerning the *De otio religioso* and has relegated the text to the neglected category of Petrarch's *opere minori*. The tradition of such relegation started with the work carried out by the French cleric, Cochin, who reverently wrote in 1903 that the *De otio* was the serene "éloge de l'otium [...] non tout à fait du repos, mais [...] de l'inoccupation de l'âme par rapport aux occupations mauvaises, de cet état de liberté et de vacance complète, qui seul rend possible de s'élever au-dessus des sens, vers les hautes pensées et jusqu'à la contemplation".[28] Mazzotta, almost echoing Cochin after some ninety years, stated

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[25] For a discussion of Gherardo's specific status, see Cochin, 1975, pp.92-96 and Boyer, 1980, pp.151 & 168 n.26.
[26] Cochin, 1975, p.7.
[27] Bishop, 1964, p.239, cit. in Constable 1980, p.57.
[28] *ibid.*, pp.158-159.

that "Gherardo's vocation brings out in Petrarch his own religious longing."[29] Indeed, the *De otio* has even been defined as a "thank-you note to the Carthusians of Montrieux"[30] and as "Petrarch's most explicit praise of monasticism".[31] Mazzotta reduces the dichotomy between the two brothers to the traditional contrast between the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa*, which respectively cultivate *negotium* and *otium*.[32] Francesco and Gherardo would supposedly seem, therefore, to be like the allegorical couples Leah and Rachel, Peter and John, Martha and Mary.[33] This *otium*, according to Mazzotta, "is the core value of monastic contemplation and [...] the ideal of classical humanism."[34] In this light, Mazzotta interprets Gherardo's type of monastic humanism as the "foundation of culture and the condition for thought."[35]

Italian criticism (Rotondi, Voci, Pacca, Dotti and Constable) also considers the entire work as praise of a "gruppo di meditativi",[36] where Petrarch supposedly felt "il fortissimo richiamo della vita claustrale", especially in Montrieux, Milan and elsewhere, and yet had "l'incapacità di abbracciarla sul serio".[37] Indeed, it is the insistence on the intellectual component which differentiates modern criticism. Voci explains Petrarch's decision not to enter the cloister from two different points of view. On the one hand, Petrarch remains firmly attached to his freedom and private income with relative honours and comforts. On the other hand, and by far more importantly, Petrarch could not bring himself to give up the learned conversation of

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[29] Mazzotta, 1993, p.147.
[30] Trinkaus, 1964, p.9, cit. in Constable, 1980, p.65.
[31] *ibid.*
[32] Mazzotta, 1993, pp.158-9.
[33] *ibid.*, p.147. These couples had become widely used in their allegorical sense, even interchangeably. For example, to symbolize the *vita activa*, Dante first uses Martha in *Convivio* IV, XVII 10, then Leah in the *Divine Comedy* (*Purg.*, XXVII 100-8). Particularly for the Mary-Martha theme, see Constable 1995, pp.3-141.
[34] Mazzotta, 1993, p.148.
[35] *ibid.*, p.160.
[36] Pacca, 1998, p.98.
[37] Voci, 1983, pp.15-25. For this 'failure' to enter monasticism, see also Constable, 1980, pp.75-86.

his friends for the company of the Carthusian monks "la cui conversazione non era colta, il cui eloquio non era facondo". Voci also points out that "Nessuno dei suoi membri [*scil.* of *Cartusia*] si distingueva per doti particolari [data] la mancata rispondenza da parte di quei religiosi alle curiosità erudite, agli interessi intellettuali, alle passioni letterarie del Petrarca". In short, "i certosini [erano] devoti amici di Cristo, ma indotti [...]. Significativo è il fatto che nessuna delle amicizie del Petrarca con religiosi fu occasionata da questi contatti con istituti monastici". If anything, Petrarch's more privileged friendships were based on erudite conversation, the transmission of culture, the search for manuscripts and a profoundly Christian *pietas*. Pacca similarly writes that Gherardo and his *confratres* are a "pubblico di ignari monaci".[38]

So, for Mazzotta and American criticism, the Carthusian cloister is a forerunner of humanism, whereas for Pacca and Voci, the cloister is full of ignorant monks. My view is that not enough weight has been given to Petrarch's verb, *doceo* when he writes, "neque ego vos torporem doceo, sed otium idque religiosum".[39] As this sentence and the title itself suggest, Petrarch wants to teach these monks about *otium religiosum*. Seeing that the monks presumably already think that they know what *otium religiosum* is, obviously Petrarch's attempt is a re-semantization of the term, a shift in meaning. I shall discuss Petrarch's meaning of *otium* below. I conclude here by saying that obviously, in this light, the work *cannot* at all be considered laudatory.

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[38] Pacca, p.102.

[39] *De otio*, p.586 cit. in Pacca, 1998, p.99. Pacca, however, simply takes the tradition based on the Aracri translation and Rotondi's definitive text. Cf. Bufano, 1987, p.38.

The *stilus monasticus* of the *De otio*

As I have already mentioned, the question of style has also been a main factor in the relegation of *De otio* to Petrarch's *opere minori*. What has *not* been considered by the same scholars, however, is Petrarch's ability to veil his messages even when adopting an apparently humbler style. The fact is that Petrarch knew that no contemporary traditional type of institutionalised religiosity would ever produce a sound, truly anagogic *reductio ad unum* of humanistic erudition and Catholic theology. This is what Pacca terms as the "aspetto più interessante del trattato [...] l'evidente sforzo di mostrare che la sapienza classica prefigura quella cristiana [...] [with] l'irrimediabile inferiorità dei dotti pagani esclusi dalla rivelazione".[40] I shall come back to this supposed inferiority of non-Christian literature later in my analysis to see how and on what level Petrarch regarded the classical and Christian traditions. Let us, for the moment, remark on the fact that modern scholarship has chosen *not* to underline the fact that contention and style go hand in glove also for the *De otio*. In this treatise, Petrarch tried to produce such a *reductio ad unum* in an unusual, almost monastic style so that it might be more convincing for his specific public, which was comprised of relatively uneducated Carthusian monks. Mazzotta calls this an "artifice of Petrarch's adaptability to his interlocutors' language [...] in the intended aim of persuading his correspondent, [*scil.* where this more monastic style] is without a doubt a technique of producing a certain effect on the listener."[41] In the same period in which Petrarch was writing the *De otio*, he wrote a letter to Gherardo in which we can read, "Hec tibi, germane unice, non meo sed peregrino stilo ac prope monastico dictavi, te potius quam me ipsum cogitans".[42] We shall see in the ensuing analysis of the *Familiares* addressed to Gherardo that the letter in

[40] Pacca, 1998, p.100.
[41] Mazzotta, 1987, p.152.
[42] *Fam.*, X 3, 59.

question is structurally, ideologically and polemically in line with the *De otio*, and is part of a planned *accessus ad auctorem* or introduction to Augustinian theology. Indeed, we can extrapolate from the letter a norm according to which we may read the *De otio*. In other words, we can interpret Petrarch's 'artifice' or *forma locutionis* as a suitable linguistic means for the *capacitas audientium*, that is, for the capacity of his listeners to grasp the lesson.

In a letter to Francesco Nelli, Petrarch describes how he had dealt with the invitation to become apostolic secretary. He writes that he would have had to "humiliare ingenium" and "inclinare stilum".[43] We know that as far as Avignon was concerned, Petrarch had adroitly and firmly refused to do such a thing. As far as Montrieux is concerned, however, this is exactly what he does. That is, his *sermo* becomes *humilis* (his *ingenium*, however, is another matter again).

Auerbach points out that the whole idea of simplifying language, that is, of using a *sermo humilis*, was a method employed by the Fathers of the Latin Church to teach certain items of faith which otherwise would have remained rather obscure. This does not mean that the same Fathers did not elsewhere subscribe to the sound Graeco-Roman traditions of rhetoric.[44] St Ambrose, for example, in his *De Isaac et anima*, refers to such 'plain speech' when he decides to forgo his eloquence and knowledge. He writes that he "conscendit tamen ad eorum inscitiam qui non intelligunt, et simplici atque planiore atque usitato sermone utitur, ut possit intelligi".[45]

St Augustine, however, will never reach the same *humilitas* in language as his teacher and baptizer, St Ambrose. He will, instead, theorize about eloquence. In the *De doctrina christiana* 4, he classifies language into three groups: 'grande',

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[43] *Fam.*, XIII 5, 13.
[44] Auerbach, 1971, pp.165-173.
[45] *De Isaac et anima*, 7, 57.

'temperatum' and 'submissum'. In practice, however, his own style of *sermo humilis* was really a mixture of all three groups. He says, after all, that the Holy Scriptures contain the greatest mysteries when they are at their most humble.[46]

John of Salisbury, in his *Metalogicus*, specifically praises the famous *magister* of theology, Bernard of Chartres, for his particular *modus docendi*, which effectively adjusted the language of the lesson to the capabilities of his students so that the contents might more easily be assimilated. John writes:

> ita tamen, ut non in singulis universa doceret, sed pro capacitate audientium, dispensaret eis in tempore doctrinae mensuram. [...] nihil utilius ad eloquentiam, nihil expeditius ad scientiam, et plurimum confert ad vitam, si tamen hanc sedulitatem regit charitas, si in profectu litterario servetur humilitas.[47]

We shall see in the *Familiares* addressed to Gherardo how Petrarch is a part of the same teaching tradition. Indeed, like Bernard's concern for the *profectus litterarius* of his students, Petrarch too will always have his mind on the literary 'profit' or progression of his younger brother.

Analogously, Dante realises that the contents of his 'sacro poema' surpass the realms of the classical definitions of 'low, humble style'. In the *Epistola* XIII to Cangrande, the expression, "remissus est modus et humilis, quia locutio vulgaris in qua et muliercule communicant", prescribes to the same need to adjust language in order to teach important issues.[48] The *Divine Comedy* is, after all, about individual redemption and salvation, the paramount issues of the day. The fact that the *Inferno* is written in a realistic, plain and, at times, even scurrilous language, does not detract from this overall aim. Petrarch had a 'divine' precedent for his own religious production.

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[46] Aug., *doctr. christ.*, 137, 18.
[47] *Metalogicus* 1, 24 in *PL*, 199, col.854-56, cit. Vàrvaro, 1985, pp.29-30.
[48] *Epist.*, 13,10. On the classical topos of conformity of form and content present in both the literature

We can conclude, therefore, that the "peregrinus stilus ac prope monasticus", or "inclinatus stilus" in which Petrarch chose to write to his brother was not necessarily an indication of poverty of content. On the contrary, the fact that Petrarch adopts this particular rhetorical stance in the *De otio religioso* indicates that the work is fully in line with the patristic and scholastic traditions of sound teaching method. St Ambrose, St Augustine, Bernard of Chartres and Dante were still *magistri* of philosophy and rhetoric even though they sometimes humbled and adjusted their language. Analogously, the content of the *De otio* is not necessarily less important than the issues confronted in his more highly polished works. By delving beneath the question of form, we can discover that, along the lines of Petrarch's *Secretum*, certain *bucolica carmina* and many *familiares*, the implicit ideological framework of the *De otio* seems to be against what Petrarch took Gherardo to represent. If Gherardo is *exemplaris* of the intellectual component of western monastic practices, then the issue is of no little importance or impact.[49]

If the *De otio* was indeed sent to Montrieux (and there is no evidence to suggest that it was), by looking at the manuscript tradition, I hypothesize that the Carthusians somehow understood, and rejected, its implicit meaning. The documented evidence points out that of the eight manuscripts containing the *De otio* extant in France, not one is held in, nor was one at any time owned by, a Carthusian monastery. This decision could not have been dictated by cost, inasmuch as the private *scriptoria* of the larger Charterhouses regularly produced tens of other manuscripts per year. A few copies of a flattering, short, laudatory work would have easily been justifiable for the Carthusians' collective budget.

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of monasticism and Dante, see Pertile, 1998, p.235-6.

[49] For the relationship between *exemplaritas* and mediaeval teaching method, see Del Corno, 1989, pp.299-233.

This fact is also paradoxical in the light of both Petrarch and his fame. Despite the modern appreciation of the work as a generally uninspired or confused piece of rhetoric, critics of the *De otio* have invariably confirmed Cochin's view of it as a "louange de la vie monastique". It would follow that any order would have been only too proud to be the addressee of such a work. Its author had been a world-renowned scholar, not to mention poet-laureate, for some ten years before the second and final version of the *De otio* was begun (1353-1357). Petrarch's other works had also already become collectors' items. His other addressees were also very proud to be connected with the work of such a famous intellectual. The fact that, in 1352, Petrarch had been personally asked by the pope to become his apostolic secretary must also have been of special significance for a religious institution, especially in Provence.[50] The position of apostolic secretary was not only coveted but it proved to the world Petrarch's fame and, more importantly, his unquestionable, exemplary orthodoxy as a Christian man of letters. Furthermore, Petrarch was intimately connected with the Charterhouse of Montrieux inasmuch as his closest living male relative was a member there. Despite these significant factors, the Carthusians never held a copy of the *De otio*.

The reason for the absence of the *De otio* in Carthusian libraries might be, after all, purely political. The absence of certain French manuscripts is often due to the anti-clerical attitude of the French Revolution during which many manuscripts were destroyed or confiscated together with other church property. The French Revolution, however, cannot be adduced to explain the situation afterwards. I refer to the fact that the Chartreuse Notre Dame de Montrieux, where Gherardo lived, does not own, or have a copy of, the contents of the archives it once held. It does not even own a copy of the *Annales Ordinis Carthusiensis*, written in the second

[50] *Fam.*, XIII 5. The date, 1352, was proposed by Fracassetti.

half of the nineteenth century, which specifically mention its foundation and early history. What hope was there for a seemingly unimportant letter of praise, such as the *De otio*?

An explanation solely based on politics cannot, therefore, be adduced to explain the absence of the *De otio* in French Charterhouses. Pellegrin has identified extant manuscripts containing the *De otio* in religious institutions founded well before the French Revolution. Manuscripts containing *De otio* were purchased and owned, for example, by Cardinal Mazzarino, an important seventeenth-century Jesuit. The manuscript was held in the libraries of the Abbaye de St-Denis (of Benedictine foundation but under the Congregation of St Maur until its suppression during the French Revolution), the Abbaye de St-Bertin (of Benedictine foundation, destroyed in 1773), Le Collège de Navarre à Paris, the Abbaye de St-Vaast d'Arras (Benedictine) and the Abbaye St-Victor de Paris (Augustinian canons regular).[51] According to Pellegrin, it would seem, therefore, that before the French Revolution, the *De otio* was primarily owned by Jesuits, Benedictines (including Maurists) and Augustinians, but *not* by Carthusians. Indeed, Rotondi reports that in the *Repertorium librorum domus Cartusie* compiled in 1500, there are two copies of *De vita solitaria* listed, but no menton whatsoever of the *De otio religioso*.[52] It should also be noted that the Benedictines and the Augustinians mentioned as owners of the *De otio* were orders which were particularly distinguished for their learning. The Augustinian canons regular of the Abbaye St-Victor de Paris had founded the extremely famous school of theology of the same name. Before their suppression, the Maurists, for example, founded in 1618, were famous for their scholarship and literary works. In conclusion, it would seem that only intellectually motivated

[51] Pellegrin, 1966, I pp.369, 378-9, 387-8, 391, 409-11, 417; II pp.275, 297-8. See also Rotondi, 1949, p.155-156.
[52] Rotondi, 1949, p.155.

individuals and orders were interested in the *De otio*. Should we conclude that the Carthusians *tout court* were simply *not* intellectually motivated?

The present analysis of the *De otio* has brought me to read it as literature for teaching purposes. That is to say, I have read the work as a text in which the persons and places alluded to were meant to be understood as *exempla* of categories of people and of generic situations befalling *all*, or much, of humanity. Gherardo, therefore, may represent not only the entire Carthusian Order as an institution of learning, contemplation and spiritual development, but also, perhaps, western monastic practices of an Augustinian-Benedictine matrix, which for so long had held a monopoly over learning. Francesco, on the other hand, may be taken to represent the new category of non-cloistered intellectuals who refused this model despite its prestige.[53]

Such *exemplaritas* would also explain why Petrarch wanted to share his brotherly concerns, which, to a modern sensibility, might otherwise have seemed a private affair, with such a vast reading audience. That is to say, a reading of the *De otio* as *exemplaris* allows us to understand why Petrarch chose to write it in Latin and allow it to circulate, when he could easily have written a long private letter to Gherardo, perhaps even in vernacular Tuscan or Provençal. The fact the *De otio* did circulate in Latin means that it is exemplary literature meant for teaching.

[53] Obviously, the entire category of intellectuals working and doing research at *Studia* such as Bologna, Paris and Oxford is not taken into consideration here. It would seem, however, that Petrarch wants to represent the new type of intellectual who does not want to be associated with any particular institution, whether religious or secular.

The *fil rouge* between the *De otio* and the *RVF*: Una candida cerva

The *De otio* opens with a rather familiar atmosphere reminiscent of Petrarch's sonnet 190 *Una candida cerva.*

> Una candida cerva sopra l'erba
> verde m'**apparve**, con duo corna d'oro,
> fra due riviere, all'ombra d'un alloro,
> levando 'l sole a la stagione acerba.
>
> Era sua vista si' dolce superba,
> ch'i' lasciai per seguirla ogni lavoro:
> come l'avaro che 'n cercar tesoro
> con diletto l'affanno disacerba.
>
> "Nessun mi tocchi – al bel collo d'intorno
> scritto avea di diamanti et di topazi-:
> libera farmi al mio Cesare parve".
>
> Et era 'l sol gia' volto al mezzo giorno,
> gli occhi miei stanchi di mirar, non sazi,
> quand'io caddi ne l'acqua, et ella **sparve**.

On an explicit level in the *De otio*, Petrarch compares himself to "the sweetness of this miserable life". More implicitly, he compares himself to Julius Caesar and, on an even more implicit level, he compares himself to the Christ-like doe of the above-mentioned sonnet. Petrarch writes,

> ut omnis dulcedo vite huius vento fugacior esse solet, veni simul atque abii, utque in longinqua valde materia verbo cesareo uti possim: "veni, vidi, vici."[54]

Just as the snow-white doe of the sonnet appeared (*apparve*), so too did Petrarch arrive at Montrieux in 1347 (*veni*). Similarly, just as the doe disappeared (*sparve*), so too did Petrarch the day after (*abii*). There is also an analogous presence of imperial Caesarean authority. Just as the doe of the sonnet had appeared with the

[54] *De otio*, p.567.

writing around its neck "Nessun mi tocchi – libera farmi al mio Cesare parve",[55] so too does Petrarch use a *verbum cesareum*, that is, the phrase attributed to Julius Caesar, "veni, vidi, vici".[56] In the ensuing analysis, I shall endeavour to explain what this 'conquering' might have meant.

The ordering of the *Canzoniere* in turn allows us to see, via the insertion of "'l signore, anzi 'l nimico mio" of the preceding sonnet (189), (and, of course, of many other instances throughout the *RVF*) that Petrarch's Caesar is *Amor*. This *Amor*, in its most elevated meaning, alludes to the Father, the *Primus et Summus Amor*. It would seem, therefore, that Petrarch was striving to create an implicit, palinodic, cross-language allusion to himself as a representative of Divine Love (and, therefore, also of *Sapientia*?) who had come to conquer the Carthusians with imperial authority. Indeed, in the *Familiares*, we shall see Petrarch almost as a latter-day apostle inspired by the Holy Ghost. I shall return later to the concept of *Sapientia*, especially at the end of the *De otio* where Petrarch compares the monks of Montrieux to insipient beasts of burden, that is, to animals without *sapientia*. For the moment, it should be clear that, obviously, Petrarch considers the "sweetness of this miserable life" not his own person, but rather the fruit of his own reflections, guided by *Amor*, which he now wants to impart to the Carthusian community. In the "sweetness" of the treatise on *otium religiosum*, it would be difficult not to think of Cicero's "nihil dulcius otio litterato",[57] which Petrarch seems to reflect in his *De remediis*.[58] And if my parallel reading of sonnet 190 is correct, then the teaching or imparting of this knowledge is, therefore, implicitly likened to a conquering. A truly

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[55] *RVF*, 190, 9-11.

[56] For the proverbial expression, "veni, vidi, vici", which seems to derive from Flor. II xiii [IV ii] 63: "venit, percussit, abscessit", and *De gestis Caesaris* 24, see Brugnoli, 1998, p.185.

[57] *Tusc.* 5, 36.

[58] *De rem.*, 21 *De otio et quiete*, 6, "Refert multum hoc ipsum otium quale sit: duas nempe species otii diffiniunt, operosi alteram atque ipsa in requie laborantis ac circa honesta studia soliciti, **quo nil est dulcius**".

Christian *otium* should be *litteratum*, as it was for the ancient philosophers, and not *otiosum*, as it is for the Carthusians. For a non-cloistered man of letters to impart such "sweetness" to cloistered monks of a long-standing tradition must have seemed quite a conquest indeed.

The parallel reading would also suggest that Petrarch, like the snow-white doe, can appear and disappear with God-given freedom hoping to leave the eyes of his Carthusian hosts "stanchi di mirar, [but] non sazi".[59] Such an interpretation would indicate that the *De otio*, as a treatise on monasticism, is protreptical, that is, meant to prompt its readers on to an ever-greater understanding of such a definition of *otium* by providing the prime materials for further investigation. Dante had once termed the use of Latin in philosophical endeavour as the "via a più innanzi andare".[60] Analogously, we might say that, for the Carthusians, the *De otio* was written to be the means of continuing on the way towards God. In other words, according to Petrarch, they still had a long way to go.

The dating of sonnet 190 also suggests a chronological link with the *De otio*. Though generally considered undateable or ascribed to the middle of the 1340s, a later date for sonnet 190 has also been advanced. By seeing in the "sparve" an allusion to Laura's death, the sonnet would appear to have been written some time after 1348.[61] The sonnet itself was not amongst the *fragmenta* in the *Prima raccolta* of 1358, or in the *Redazione Correggio* of 1359. It was not even in the *Forma Chigi*, the copy made by Boccaccio around 1363.[62] It was, instead, to be inserted among the *fragmenta* in vernacular as late as the so-called 'Forma di Giovanni', that is, in the collection of poems compiled by Giovanni Malpaghini around 1366. In this redaction, sonnet 190 occupies the important position at the end of the *parte in*

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[59] *RVF*, 190, 13.
[60] *Cv.*, I XIII 5.
[61] Santagata, 1996, pp.824-828.

vita di Madonna Laura.[63] It becomes the *explicit* of Petrarch's love affair with a living woman who had supposedly been the inspiration for his poetics. Sonnet 190, therefore, heralds the onset of a shift in Petrarchan poetics. It is with sonnet 190 that Petrarch begins his philosophical descent (and concomitant heightening of his discourse) into death in his later years. This will be the period in which, as I shall discuss in the chapter on Mary Magdalene, Petrarch, via autoschediasma, 'adjusts' his earlier life and works so as to accommodate newer perspectives and programmes. In other words, the 'atmosphere' of the Latin *De otio* will again become operative, but this time in the vernacular.

Petrarch's exclusion

From outside Montrieux, Petrarch rhetorically asks the secluded Carthusian monks what they thought peasants, merchants and men of letters could possibly obtain from hard labour, solicitude and long-burning night candles. Surely this gain could only be in terms of:

> terrestre lucrum, vel fama volatilis, vel fugitiva et instabilis voluptas, vel vento quolibet incertior atque fugacior popularis ineptissimus ac levissimus aure favor?[64]

It is, in fact, in this very contrast between the men of the cloister and those futilely and feverishly trying to earn a living outside that *De otio religioso* may be read. Petrarch chooses to exclude himself from such an institutionalised religious *modus vivendi*. On the one hand, Gherardo and his fellow monks are "angeli Dei in terra",[65] and "dominice apes".[66] Petrarch then points out to the monks that "vos singulas oves

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[62] *ibid.*, pp.253-254, 347.
[63] *ibid.*, p.347-348.
[64] *De otio*, p.574, paraphrased pp.804-806, "merces aut breve lucrum aut aura volatilis et falsus favor".
[65] *ibid.*, p.568.
[66] *ibid.*, p.570.

vestras, hoc est animam quisque suam, pascitis letis ac duplicibus in pascuis Iesu Cristi".[67] Obviously, the "doubly fertile fields" are of the body and the spirit. The reference to the monks as bees is part of a tradition stretching back through a long series of mediaeval writers[68] to Virgil's *Georgic* IV, in which bees were seen to represent the perfect, organised society. Gherardo and his companions of the cloth are free of every earthly master or vice and are thus capable of dedicating their lives directly and constantly to the contemplation of God. Indeed, the "servitium"[69] or "iter", which leads the monks to their "requies", is "planum, rectum, tutum" and "delectabile".[70] It is also "breve", which will occasion the *brevitas* of Gherardo's straight, easy climb to the top of Mt. Ventoux of *Familiaris* IV 1. The Carthusians must only respect one brief and not difficult precept: not to fight, not to set sail, not to plough, not to scheme, not to hoard gold and not to seek fame. They must also not seek a vain literary culture or instruments of pleasure, for these are, "inutilia, nocitura, pestifera [...quae...] querenda fatigant, quesita non satiant, amissa cruciant, servanda solicitant".[71] In other words, the Carthusians were seeking to recreate in the cloister a 'golden age'[72] or the *otium Domini* of the seventh day of Creation. They had done away with the active part of life. In keeping with the nautical metaphor, which is the dominant metaphor throughout the whole work, Petrarch likens the monks to sailors who have safely reached the port, dry land or the lap of God in a new, 'golden age' Jerusalem. By contrast every other *modus vivendi* and city is Babylonian.

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[67] *ibid.*, p.572.
[68] Eg. Thomas de Cantimpré, *Bonum universale de apibus*; Albertus Magnus *De animalibus* 26, 1; Hugh of St Victor, *Liber institutioni monasticae de bestiis et aliis rebus* 3, 38; Rabanus Maurus, *De universo* 8, 6; St Ambrose *Hexaëmeron* 5, 21-22; St Basil, *Hom. in Hexaëmeron.*
[69] *De otio*, p.572.
[70] *ibid.*, p.578.
[71] *ibid.*
[72] See, for example, Virgil *Georg.*, 1, 125-128; *Aen.*, 6, 791-794; *Aen.*, 8, 319 & ff.

Indeed, the contrast, Jerusalem-Babylon, to which we might add, Rome-Avignon, faithfully mirrors the contrast between Petrarch and Gherardo. Compared to Gherardo, Petrarch is a self-derided man of letters, a "peccator homo fessus, inscius, occupatus".[73] By defining the Carthusian monks as "the angels, bees" and now "sheep in the flock of Christ", Petrarch implicitly becomes, by his own definition, the proverbial lost sheep which has strayed away from the flock together with those who "longe igitur falluntur, et tota, ut dicitur, errant via".[74] It is in this sense that Petrarch is "pessimus",[75] that he has perpetrated iniquity.[76]

The dichotomy which Petrarch establishes between himself (peccator pessimus) and Gherardo (angelical bee) and, consequently, between his own *modus vivendi* and Gherardo's, can be understood in the light of a long cultural tradition going back through St Augustine to Manes. In other words, the Petrarchan dichotomy, in the history of ideas, has nothing to do with the newer Gothic tripartite division of the cosmos to which Dante subscribed. The dichotomy was established between a life of continual *peregrinatio in exilio*, on the one hand, and a life in the stable port of monasticism, on the other.[77] Indeed, for Petrarch, everyone who is not "in portu"[78] is destined to remain in a type of Augustinian state of 'pre-conversion'. St Augustine describes his life before his conversion as Babylonian. Whilst wandering 'from square to square', Augustine writes, "Ecce cum quibus comitibus iter agebam platearum Babyloniae et volutabar in caeno eius tamquam in cinnamis et unguentis pretiosis".[79] Even in his *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, which were

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[73] *ibid.*, p.570.
[74] *ibid.*, pp.572, 576.
[75] *ibid.*, p.624.
[76] *ibid.*, p.646, "supplitio digni sumus: peccavimus cum patribus nostris; iniuste egimus; iniquitatem fecimus".
[77] Cf. Constable, *Monachisme*, 1979, p.4; Constable, *Opposition*, 1979, p.136; & Constable, 1980, p.82.
[78] For the metaphor of Babylon as *confusio* and monastic *otium* as a port in *De otio religioso*, see pp. 696, 700, 702, 706, 722, 786; for Vaucluse as "notum procellarum animi mei portum", see *Fam.*, V1, 5.
[79] *conf.*, 2, 3, 8.

completed as late as 416, Augustine continues to use manichaeistic and neo-Platonic language when he describes earthly life as a prison. He writes, "in ista Babylonia non cives habitamus sed captivi detinemur".[80] The ultimate home for those lucky enough to have been predestined to it is "Ierusalem, id est [...] Sion."[81] Petrarch maintains Augustine's manicheistic vision, but he transforms the Augustinian metaphor of a pre-conversion life spent roaming around muddy squares into the nautical metaphor. That is, Petrarch describes himself the sinner, and every other sinner like him, as destined to sail the seas erring. He writes:

> Lustrant naute maria, omne mundi latus ambiunt, peregrinis errant sine fine litoribus inter ventos et fluctus et scopulos, inter freti celique minas omnes, **glaciali imbre stillantibus comis membrisque rigentibus**, prope tartareas noctes agunt, dum cunta in circuitu miseros terrent, **presentemque viris intentant omnia mortem** ut Virgilius ait.[82]

The trope of the shipwreck or of being caught in a stormy sea is taken directly from Virgil, as Petrarch explicitly declares.[83] Virgil's personifications of the winds, "Notus", "Eolus", "Aquilo" and "Africus" have become Petrarch's more generic "venti"; Virgil's winds, which send "vasti [...] ad litora fluctus", have become his "litoribus inter ventos et fluctus", and Virgil's "saxa" have become his "scopuli".[84] These *scopuli* will appear again in an analogous context dealing with *otium* in his *De remediis*.[85]

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[80] Aug., *in Ps.*, 136, 2, 5-6.
[81] *ibid.*, 2, 4.
[82] *De otio*, p.574.
[83] Especially in *Aen.*, 1, 86, "ad litora fluctus"; *ibid.*, 91-92, "praesentemque viris intentant omnia mortem./ Extemplo Aeneae solvontur frigore membra"; *ibid.*, 102-103, "Aquilone procella/ velum adversa ferit fluctusque"; *ibid.*, 107-110, "terram inter fluctus aperit, furit aestus harenis./ Tris Notus abreptas in saxa latentia torquet/ (saxa, vocant Itali mediis quae in fluctibus Aras,/ dorsum immane mari summo), tris Eurus ab alto".
[84] For Virgil's *saxa* in Dante explained also in the light of Cic. *De finibus*, 5, 18, cf. Gavarelli, 1993, p.281, n.19-24, & Corti, 1989, p.484, n.16.
[85] *De rem.*, 21 *De otio et quiete*, 20, "Si pro levi enim gloria aut lucro exiguo et bellatores et mercatores et naute totis sub divo noctibus pervigilant, illi quidem inter hostium insidias, hi quolibet hoste peiores **inter fluctus ac scopulos**, tu propter veram gloriam lucrumque ingens inter Dei laudes ac libellos tuos partem noctium vigilare non poteris?"

The Virgilian source also helps us understand Petrarch's text from the point of view of his 'dripping wet hair and stiffening limbs'. In the *De otio*, however, Petrarch has not summarised the Virgilian description. He has, rather, amplified it, whereby Virgil's "frigore membra" becomes his "glaciali imbre stillantibus comis membrisque rigentibus". Servius glosses Virgil's text where he writes that "frigus" indicates "timor".[86] From this we can easily infer that the allegorical meaning of Petrarch's expression is not that he is 'cold and wet'. In such a raging storm outside the walls of monasticism, Petrarch is literally 'scared stiff'. Indeed, if he was also thinking of sonnet 189, to which I referred above,[87] (and which I shall include here below), his being 'scared stiff' is well justified as he begins to "desperar del porto" amid the "pioggia di lagrimar" and "nebbia di sdegni". The battle Petrarch is waging outside the walls of monasticism is the real *discrimen* of his life.

It is this very point that Petrarch's allusive prose provides its own exegesis. The parallel description of the storm in both Virgil and Petrarch indicates a parallel between Petrarch's situation outside Gherardo's type of monasticism on the one hand, and Aeneas's predicament on the other. From this we can formulate another hypothesis. That is to say, Aeneas is in a storm which terrifies him. He consequently clasps his hands as he calls on the help of his fathers in Troy. The description of Aeneas' position compared to the city of Troy can be interpreted as analogous to Petrarch's position concerning the Carthusian Order and, perhaps, monasticism *tout court*. That is to say, if Aeneas is "Troiae sub moenibus altis", then Petrarch is also 'under the lofty walls of Montrieux and cloistered monasticism'. And just like Aeneas, who has fled from Troy never to return again, Petrarch has decided not to enter the cloister and never to go there again. Indeed we know that after his visit to Montrieux in 1353, Petrarch will never see the

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[86] Serv. *Aen.*, I, 92.

Charterhouse or his brother again. We shall come back to this parallel between Troy and Montrieux in the chapter dedicated to the *Familiares*. Let it be said here, however, that abandoning Troy also meant that Aeneas had already begun his journey towards the founding of a new civilisation in Italy. Analogously, Petrarch knew that he was abandoning the old in order to found something profoundly new.

It is, however, the very same iniquity which Petrarch accuses himself of, as I shall discuss in the chapter on Mary Magdalene, that will allow Petrarch to become a better Christian. It is his status as a *peccator* that allows him both to know and worship God better than Gherardo, and teach (doceo) his brother about *otium* and *sapientia*.

The starting point of the *De otio*, therefore, very strongly suggests another relationship with sonnet 190, *Una candida cerva*, in the sense that it seems to be a reduced version in prose of the sonnet immediately preceding it, that is, the above-mentioned sonnet 189[88].

> Passa la nave mia colma d'oblio
> per aspro mare, a mezza notte il verno,
> enfra Scilla et Caribdi; et al governo
> siede 'l signore, anzi 'l nimico mio.
>
> A ciascun remo un penser pronto et rio
> che la tempesta e 'l fin par ch'abbi a scherno;
> la vela rompe un vento humido eterno
> di sospir', di speranze et di desio.
>
> Pioggia di lagrimar, nebbia di sdegni
> bagna et rallenta le già stanche sarte,
> che son d'error con ignorantia attorto.
>
> Celansi i duo mei dolci usati segni;
> morta fra l'onde è la ragion et l'arte,
> tal ch'incomincio a desperar del porto.

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[87] See p. 20.
[88] *ibid.*

The port or haven which Petrarch is desperately trying to reach is lost, for Laura is somehow absent and can no longer guide him with her eyes. In the course of the present analysis, we shall come back very often to the nautical metaphor which is used and developed by Petrarch in various ways. Let us, however, keep in mind that the starting point which Petrarch has provided for a correct exegesis of the *De otio* presents two dichotomies, at sea: *in portu*; Scylla: Charybdis. 'Being at sea' is to be understood in an Augustinian pre-conversion sense of 'wandering around Babylon from muddy square to muddy square', that is, of wallowing in a state of sin. Conversely, 'being *in portu*' is to be understood as a state of bliss, to reach the summit of Sion. The second dichotomy is not so clear-cut. Obviously it is not positive to be either in Scylla or in Charybdis. I believe that this second dichotomy sheds light on the first, inasmuch as it is the metaphor which best represents the ideal position of the Christian warrior eternally *between* the sea and the port. As such, Petrarch will use it repeatedly throughout the *Familiares*. Petrarch's intention was not to scale the lofty walls of monasticism towering above this port, but nor was it to carelessly navigate beyond the columns of Hercules as Dante's Ulysses had done. The true battle, according to Petrarch, is to remain at sea not in a state of absolute sin and not yet in the haven of heavenly bliss, but constantly fighting in a bid to reach that very same port. In other words, it is between Scylla and Charybdis that Petrarch finds the ideal place for his non-cloistered humanism.

The madness of being out there at sea, rather than in the safety of a monastic haven, is also present in another work written at the same time, the *Psalmi penitentiales*. Petrarch claims to have written these Davidic-type psalms in less than one day somewhere between 1347 and 1349. The underlying motivation seems to have been his sincere contrition for the *giovenile errore* which was also at the basis

of the contrast we are currently studying between Petrarch and Gherardo.[89] *Psalmus* I is the most reminiscent of my reading of the *De otio*. Petrarch has abandoned the "iter rectum" and has penetrated "aspera et inaccessa" only to become brutishly involved in "anxietates cum voluptate." Consequently, he has been made entirely similar to a shipwrecked sailor who has lost his goods, must swim naked and is tossed about by the winds and the sea. The language and the dominant metaphor are identical to those in both the *De otio* and sonnet 189. In short, Petrarch is "elongatus [...] a portu [...] **demens**".[90]

The insanity of actually wanting to place oneself *ex portu* is exactly where the *discrimen* lies between the two brothers in both its current and etymological senses. *Discrimen* means both "dangerous situation" and "separating line". On this very point, it is interesting to note that Santagata reports that the expression "enfra Scilla et Caribdi", was commonly used as a proverb, even without any direct semantic connection with Ulysses, indicating the presence of some incumbent danger.[91] Petrarch knew, in other words, that it was indeed dangerous for him to be out there on his own, that his was a courageous decision. Let us also keep in mind, however, that if Petrarch is *demens ex portu*, then the five noble Roman women winding their way down to Compostela in *Fam.*, XVI 8 *Ad Lelium suum*, to whom I shall return in a separate chapter, are also *dementes* in diametrical opposition to Gherardo's type of religiosity. We can infer that in his 'madness', Petrarch is in good company on this side of the separating line.

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[89] For my reading and the chronology of Petrarch's *Psalmi,* see Gigliucci, 1997, pp.10, 15 and Santagata, 1993, p.74.

[90] *Ps. pen.*, I 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 17.

[91] Santagata, 1996, p.821, "indipendentemente dal ricordo della navigazione di Ulisse, l'espressione era divenuta proverbiale (e come tale P. la usa più volte) per indicare l'incombere del pericolo". Cf. Boccaccio *Vita et moribus Domini Francisci Petracchi* (ed. Branca, p.906), "ne forsan Scillam fugiens assumendo, amplectens nimia rueret in Caribdim".

Governing their positions with respect to the port of God, between the two brothers there is also supposedly a question of predestination. Concerning this very same issue, the falling out with St Augustine experienced in the *explicit* of *Secretum* III continues here in the *De otio.* Compared to the *Secretum*, the only difference in Petrarch's conflict with St Augustine or Augustinianism is that, in the *Secretum*, the problem is a question of *amor et gloria*, whereas here in the *De otio* it becomes a question of determinism or predestination.[92] We shall see in the later discussion of fate that Petrarch will turn the idea of Gherardo's predestination around. Petrarch, and *not* Gherardo, becomes the brother destined to glory. In other words, the *Secretum* and the *De otio* deal with the same issues.

Petrarch points out in the very *incipit* of the *De otio* that the inherent discrimination or dichotomy between him, the self-defined "peccator", and the monks of Montrieux, whom he calls "dominice apes", is essentially one of divine genetic determination. Petrarch refers to the Carthusians as the "bene nata gens",[93] "praedestina[ta] in numerum electorum [...] priusquam [*scil.* Deus] formaret in utero".[94] The phrase echoes Jeremiah and carries out the function of placing Gherardo's calling on the same level as that of a prophet or of a saint.[95] I shall come back to Petrarch's insistence upon his common and yet very different birth compared to Gherardo's in the chapter on the *Familiares*. For the moment we must consider two facts:

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[92] St Augustine theorized on predestination throughout many works. Perhaps the most salient is the *Enarrationes in Psalmos* in which he peremptorily states that many souls have been predestined to be citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem even before they themselves realise it, eg. 64, 2, 35-9 "novit Dominus, conditor Ierusalem, quos cives eius praedestinaverit, quos videat adhuc sub dominatu diaboli redimendos sanguine Christi, novit illos ipse antequam se ipsi noverint"; 136, 1, 13, "Sed quod adtinet ad homines praedestinatos in gloriam Dei"; 136, 2, 17 & 136, 21, 13.

[93] *De otio*, p.570.

[94] *ibid.*, p.568.

[95] *Hier.* I 4-5, "et factum est verbum Domini ad me dicens priusquam te formarem in utero novi te et antequam exires de vulva sanctificavi te prophetam gentibus dedi te".

1. In the light of the entire work, it becomes obvious that Petrarch is not convinced about the validity of such a divine calling. Of course it would be infinitely easier to *vacare et videre* (discussed below) from within the safety of the mighty walls of Jerusalemite monasticism if one had really been divinely destined to it.
2. If Gherardo's new family had already been given a predisposition towards holiness, then Petrarch, the *homo exemplaris*, represents all the less privileged mortals of the world who have not been called to the cloister.

Petrarch confronts the first point by challenging the Carthusian definitions of *otium* and *felicitas*. We shall see this better below. Petrarch confronts the second point by setting himself up like a shipwrecked sailor or a "bellator vir".[96] He then draws a parallel between the sea-erring sailors described above[97], these soldiers, and the people of somewhat less dramatic walks of life, including men of letters. As we shall also see in the analysis of the *Familiares*, such military and nautical language chiefly derives from the scholastic formation both Petrarch and Gherardo had received. The battle in each case is entirely analogous, whether it be the "agricolarum labor", the "mercatorum solicitudo", the "literatorum vigilie", the "sudor artificum", the "luxuriosorum anxietas" or the "ambitiosorum sedulitas atque circuitus". Seeing that every one of these activities is triggered by one of the seven deadly sins, the outcome of every battle is also analogous and those involved are condemned to Babylonian perdition in the light of the quotes which Petrarch

[96] *De otio*, p.574, "bellatores viri quibus et pluvias et ventos et grandinem ferre iugis ludus – pernoctant sub armis, humi recubant, gladiis ultro se offerunt, precipites terram cruentam casside feriunt, ne, siquid horum lentius egerint, pavidi atque degeneres habeantur, denique vulnera non sentientes excipiunt et mortem, queque iacturarum minima sed extrema est, nudi et insepulti abiciuntur preda feris ludibriumque volucris".

extrapolates from the Bible.[98] The plight of those cultivating "literae inanes", however, will be quite different. In the first mention of the "literatorum vigilie", this activity occupies the third position of a list of seven 'deadly' activities.[99] Soon afterwards, the "literae inanes", seen as "studium aut labor", are respectively in second last and last positions in similar lists.[100] Whereas Petrarch concurs with the condemnation of the first groups of activities, he no longer, however, adduces any biblical or patristic source to condemn the study of letters. It would be tempting to conclude that, by *not* ratifying the condemnation, Petrarch no longer wants to denigrate this particular *bellum*. After all, it was everything he stood for and cherished as a professional man of letters and poet. To anticipate the discussions which will be held later on in this thesis, the non-ratificatoin might also be interpreted as an indication that such a battle is the only activity carried out *ex portu* which might possibly *not* lead to perdition. In other words, this *bellum* might actually lead to God. Indeed, in the ensuing analysis of the *De otio*, we shall see that this battle becomes the main *discrimen* in itself between Petrarch and those whom his brother represents. The "literae inanes", seen as the hendiadys "studium aut labor", would seem to be the key towards true happiness *ex portu*.

Vacate et videte quoniam ego sum Deus

Seeing that the Carthusian early acts of constitution place great emphasis on the term *vacare*,[101] Petrarch discusses the term, but in the light of the line from the

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[97] See n. 82.
[98] *ibid.*, pp.588-601.
[99] *ibid.*, p.574.
[100] *ibid.*, p.578.
[101] For example, "incessanter superne meditationi [...] vacare", in Bligny, 1958, p.84, cit. in Merati, 2000, p.8. The term *vacare* was naturally also a part of monastic spirituality *tout court* and implied an ideal of freedom, peace and detachment from the world. See Constable, *Monachisme*, 1979, p.27.

Psalms, "vacate et videte quoniam ego sum Deus".[102] It is immediately possible to equate Petrarch's meaning of *vacatio* with his own meaning of *otium*. His definitions seem to be conflated with classical definitions in the light of the apostolic and monastic origins of Christianity from which contemporary monasticism had fallen away. Petrarch's resemantization of *otium* is, therefore, a return to the origins.

This fundamental point has not been given due consideration by modern criticism. Mazzotta, for example, writes, "The word, "vacate" which appears in the Vulgate, however, translates the Septuagint's "scholasate," which is rooted in *schole*, the Greek word for leisure. Consistently with the Greek text, "vacate et videte" has thus been translated as "have leisure and know that I am God."[103] Obviously Mazzotta was thinking along the lines of the modern meaning of "vacation" when he adduces the Greek verb σχολαζω- to have free time, to have leisure, etc. What Mazzotta does not consider, however, is that, thanks to Petrarch's conversations with Barlaam and other learned people of his time, Petrarch must also have known the derivatives of this Greek term, namely "scola", "scuola," school. For the ancient Greeks, and for Petrarch, what one did in one's free time/leisure was *studium*. Although the Carthusian statute declares that no monk is to pursue "a vain literary culture or instruments of pleasure", Petrarch now declares that true *otium* is a time for schooling, for learning, and *not* for vacuous contemplation. *This* is the basis of the dichotomy between Francesco and Gherardo, and *not* which one is inside or outside the cloister. Indeed, when Petrarch reproposes the *Vetus Latina* version of the *Psalm* in question, the expression reinstates the specific meaning of

[102] *Ps.*, 45, 11.
[103] Mazzotta, 1993, p.162.

otium in the intellectual sense. Otherwise, the expression "otium agite" would simply be an oxymoron, and would thus not make sense. Petrarch writes,

> Hoc ergo, fratres, agite, hoc ad salutem tramite pergite: nullus rectior, nullus est tutior atque ideo totiens hoc a vobis hodie postulo, ut vacetis. Ubi enim ieronimiana translatio habet: «Vacate», vetustior habebat: «**Otium agite**», cui inherens Augustinus ait: «Unum certe querimus, quo nichil est simplicius; ergo simplicitate cordis queramus illud. Agite otium, inquit, et agnoscetis quia ego Dominus: non otium desidie, sed otium cogitationis, ut a locis ac temporibus vacet».[104]

Indeed, the difference between an "otium desidie" and an "otium cogitationis" is the basic thrust of Petrarch's teaching which, in turn, alludes to classical precedents. I am referring specifically to Sallust, Cicero and Seneca. Sallust, whose prologues were particularly famous and well known in Petrarch's time, presents a contrast between "socordia atque desidia", on the one hand, and "bonum otium", on the other.[105] Indeed, according to Sallust, "bonum otium", or "negotium", was what had made Rome so great.[106] One particular Sallustian locus refers to the confusion some make between 'servitium' (and we might imagine the Carthusian *breve servitium*[107] to God) and *otium*, as if 'serving' could somehow justify sloth, "quod ego [*scil.* Marcus] vos moneo quaesoque ut animadvertatis neu nomina rerum ad ignaviam mutantes otium pro servitio appelletis."[108]

Leclercq adroitly points out that Petrarch is the humanistic end of a long line of writers on *otium* who went back more specifically to Cicero and Seneca. Both Cicero and Seneca make a distinction between *otium* (study and intellectual

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[104] *De otio*, pp.668-669.

[105] Sall., *Cat.* 4, 1-2, "igitur ubi animus ex multis miseriis atque periculis requievit et mihi relicuam aetatem a re publica procul habendam decrevi, non fuit consilium socordia atque desidia bonum otium conterere, neque vero agrum colundo aut venando, servilibus officiis, intentum aetatem agere".

[106] *ibid.*, 8, 5, "popul[us] Roman[us] [...] prudentissimus quisque maxume negotiosus erat, ingenium nemo sine corpore exercebat"; For such *otium* in Virgil, see cf. Dionigi, 1987, pp.905-907.

[107] *De otio*, p.572.

[108] Sall., *Hist. frag.* 13, (ed. Maurenbrecher), cf. Tac., *Ann.* 3, 34, 4, "frustra nostram ignaviam alia ad vocabula transferri".

speculation) and *negotium* (politics). They do, however, express preferences. Cicero, in his *Somnium Scipionis*, states that there is a place in heaven for those who have well served the state (*negotium*).[109] Seneca, on the other hand, in his treatise *De otio*, declares that *otium* is superior to *negotium* inasmuch as posterity will more greatly benefit from it. Furthermore, Seneca is the first to introduce the idea of contemplation in his definition of *otium*.[110] Senecan *otium* will be, in fact, at the basis of the Christian concept of *otium Domini* o *otium monasticum*,[111] especially because of his combination of *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa*.[112] I might hasten to add that Petrarch inherits not only Senecan *otium*, but also Seneca's eye for posterity, that is, an *otium* which is not only useful for the individual, but which is also altruistic.[113] In other words, Petrarch's *otium* will also be *exemplare*. This is the way in which Petrarch interprets Seneca's phrase, "Otium sine literis mors est, et hominis vivi sepultura".[114] It is significant that Petrarch never explicitly quotes Seneca's *De otio*[115] even though he might have paraphrased Seneca in his *De remediis* where he writes, "altera [*scil.* species otii] [...] nil similius est sepulchro".[116] He does, however, quote Seneca's active *otium* from the *Epistola ad Lucilium* 11,89 in both *Rerum memorandarum* 3, 42 and in the first *Familiaris* he sends to Gherardo[117] with Scipio as an illustrious example.

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[109] Cic., *rep.*, 6, 13; cf. Cic., *De off.* 1, 77; *ibid.*, 3, 2.
[110] Leclercq, 1963, p.42.
[111] *ibid.*, pp.28-34; 36.
[112] Seneca *Ad Serenum de otio*, 5, 8, "Ergo secundum naturam vivo si totum me illi dedi, si illius admirator cultorque sum. Natura autem utrumque facere me voluit, et agere et contemplationi vacare: utrumque facio, quoniam ne contemplatio quidem sine actione est".
[113] Cf. Boccaccio, *De casibus*, 8, 1, 26, "Ergo agendum est, laborandum est et totis urgendum viribus ingenium, ut a vulgari segregemur grege; ut, tanquam preteriti labore suo profuere nobis, sic et nos nostro valeamus posteris"
[114] Seneca *Ad Lucil.*, 82, 3 cit. in *De vita solitaria* I in Bufano, 1987, p.306; see also Cic., *Tusc.*, 5, 36, 105 cit. in Mazzotta, 1993, p.160.
[115] *Dialog.* 8.
[116] *De rem.*, 21 *De otio et quiete*, 6. It would seem, in fact, that for his *De otio* and *De remediis*, Petrarch was thinking of Seneca. Cf. Rotondi, 1949, p.159.
[117] *Fam.*, X 3, 48.

An important crossover for Petrarch between *otium* and *vacatio* occurs in St Augustine for whom there is an "inanis vacatio" and a "fructuosa vacatio".[118] St Augustine discusses *vacatio* in *De vera religione*[119] and explores its practical consequences in *De opere monachorum* for the monks of Capraria who, around 400 AD, refused to engage in manual labour.[120] Indeed, Petrarch may have been thinking of this Augustinian work when writing to the Carthusians whom Pacca defines as "aristocratic" inasmuch as they, like the monks of Capraria, had conveniently done away with the component of manual labour otherwise foreseen in their *Regula*.[121] In the *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, Augustine terms such *vacatio* "otium litteratum" and "otium sanctum".[122] Perhaps Augustine was thinking back to Sallust when he coined the syntagma "negotium otiosum"[123] or "in otio non iners vacatio",[124] that is, a contemplative and yet active *otium* on which to found a Christian civilisation.

Nicolaus de Lyra's glosses the syntagma of the *Psalms* "vacate et videte" with "per diligentem attentionem". The gloss for "Quoniam ego sum Deus" is "cuius virtuti nullus potest resistere". The comment, however, expands considerably on the glosses, inasmuch as Nicolaus sees the overall sense of the verse as an invitation for Jews and Gentiles alike to convert; "qui ad fidem convertentur

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[118] *in Ps.* 33, S. I, 9 = *CC* 38, p.280, "si illi [*scil.* the Jews] qui Christum amiserunt, quos dimisit et abiit, habent inanem vacationem; nos habemus fructuosam vacationem ut intelligamus Christum, qui illos dimisit, et venit ad nos", cit. in Leclercq, 1963, p. 45.

[119] *PL*, 34, 151, cap. 35, par. 65.

[120] *De opere monachorum*, Migne 40, 547-582, ed. Zycha, *CSEL* 41, 1900, pp.531-595, cit. Leclercq, 1963, pp.38-39.

[121] Pacca, 1998, p.100.

[122] Aug., *in Ps.*, 19, 2 = *CC* 48, P. 660 & *ibid.*, 19, 19, P. 686-687, cit. in Leclercq, 1963, p.39; cf. *conf.*, 5, 36, "quantis igitur molestiis vacant qui nihil omnino cum populo contrahunt! Quid est enim dulcius otio litterato? Iis dico litteris, quibus infinitatem rerum atque naturae et in hoc ipso mundo caelum, terras, maria cognoscimus" cf. also *civ.*19, 2 = CC 48, p. 660, "in otio autem litterato, vel in negotio publico vel quando utrumque vicibus agitur, non continuo quisque beatus est" & *ibid.*, 19, 19 = CC 48, 687, "otium sanctum quaerit caritas veritatis; negotium iustum suscipit necessitas caritatis".

[123] Aug., *in Ps.*, 147, 3 = *CC* 40, P. 2141, "si illam vitam cogitaveris, et illius vitae negotium otiosum, de quo saepe locuti sumus, carissimi, non fluctuabit (cf. *Mt.* 8, 24-25) negotium nostrum, otiosum negotium plenum solius dulcedinis, nulla interpellatum molestia, nulla fatigatione sauciatum, nulla nube perturbatum". cit. in Leclercq, 1963, p.40.

[124] Aug., *civ.*, 19, 19, "Nec sic esse quisque debet otiosus, ut in eodem otio utilitatem non cogitet proximi, nec sic actuosus, ut contemplationem non requirat Dei. In otio non iners vacatio delectare debet, sed aut inquisitio aut inventio veritatis, ut in ea quisque proficiat et quod invenerit ne alteri

postquam plenitudo gentium intraverit". Why should Petrarch, the self-defined sinner in the *De otio* addressed to Carthusian monks, use a line from the *Psalms* which had been traditionally interpreted as an invitation for non-Christians to convert to Christianity? As we shall see in the ensuing discussion of the *De otio* and of the *Familiares*, the implicit message of the Davidic line is not, naturally, a conversion to Christianity strictly speaking. It is, rather, a conversion from Carthusian *otium*, seen by Petrarch as intellectual idleness, to the cultivation of Petrarchan *otium* or Christian *Sapientia*, seen as the only true way to salvation. Given that, according to Sallust, "bonum otium" was the key to the greatness of Rome, then, for Petrarch, it might also be the key to the return of Rome and *Romanitas*, that is, the core of what we now call Renaissance humanism. Whereas St Bruno had used the term *otium negotiosum* in the Carthusian sense[125] which, in Petrarch's eyes, would simply lead to *otiositas* (especiallyin Montrieux), Petrarch resemantizes the term *otium* by mixing it with Sallust's "bonum otium", Cicero's "otium litteratum" and Seneca's contemplative *otium*. In so doing, he passes on St Augustine's "otiosum negotium" to Renaissance humanism in the form of *negotiosissimum otium*.[126]

The above-mentioned[127] *discrimen* or dichotomy concerning the two brothers, which Petrarch places at the beginning of the *De otio*, must now be redefined. Obviously for Petrarch it becomes a question of learning, that is, of how one acquires knowledge. In a word, the treatise *De otio* is about gnoseology. In a *Familiaris* concerning Gherardo, Petrarch states that the Babylon on the Rhône would like to deprive him of his only two sources of wealth, his "libertas", which he

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invideat".

[125] Cf. Constable, 1980, p.88 n.161.

[126] Leclercq (Leclercq, 1963, pp.150-151) quotes Paul Giustiniani (1476-1528).

[127] See p.29.

also calls "gaudium et omnis vite dulcedo"[128] and his "otium", which he also calls "hae qualescunque literulae."[129] It is obvious that Petrarch's meaning of *otium* is literary, intellectual endeavour, that is, the only *bellum* for which he had not produced any definitive biblical reprobation. In choosing to reinstate the older translation of the Septuagint's 'scholasate', that is, to substitute "vacate" with "otium agite" with the firm intention of proposing a revolutionary use of *studium* as an anagogical instrument, Petrarch seems to be echoing the common heretical expression which had been popular since 1260 at least until the time of Petrarch's youth in the early 1300's. The expression at hand was "Penitençágite!" used by the Apostolici and the Dolcinians to induce the masses to repent of their sins, because they thought that the world was drawing to an end and Christ was about to pass judgement. True repentance would supposedly save the masses from damnation. Indeed, the full expression was 'penitentiam agite, appropinquabit enim regnum celorum'. In the second chapter I shall briefly explore the possible influence of the opposition between St Francis and Gherardo Segalelli in Salimbene's *Cronica* as a possible forerunner of the dichotomy between the two Petracchi brothers. Although it is unlikely that Petrarch had any direct access to Salimbene's *Cronica*, there is, nevertheless, a certain analogy between the Dolcinian motto "Penitençágite!" and Petrarch's own motto-cum-invitation for the Carthusians, "Otium agite". After all, as Petrarch firmly believed, only this *otium* (understood as *studium aut labor*) would suitably prepare Gherardo to face Christ's judgement and, perhaps, be saved.

The elevation of the acquisition of knowledge to the status of an anagogical instrument is not peculiar to Petrarch. Dante, the entire Thomistic tradition

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[128] Cf. the "omnis dulcedo vite huius" Petrarch describes himself as at the beginning of the *De otio*. See n. 54.

[129] *Fam.*, XIII 5,6. See also Boccaccio, who terms the ideal places of poets "omni tumultu civico vacantia ocia", *De casibus*, 3, 7; for Petrarch who reproaches Boccaccio for his "ignavia", see *ibid.*, 8, 1, 1 & ff.

beforehand, and, to a certain extent, also classical literature, had already seen learning in exactly this same light. A distinction had been made between the desire to accumulate more and more and the desire to know more and more. For Dante, the first was an insane, unending dilation of one's greed, which ended up consuming the greedy. The second, on the other hand, was an attempt by a "nobilissimo ed eccellentissimo cuore",[130] to piece back together the tesserae of the One Who had already written all knowledge in "i volumi del mondo".[131] The first was a greed which led to perdition, the second a thirst which led back to God (like in the Old Testament image of the stag in *Quemadmodum desiderat cervus ad fontes aquarum* to be discussed later[132]). The Carthusians really thought that it was sufficient to seek out the *otium Domini* of the seventh day while still in this life, that is, not to fight, set sail or seek a vain literary culture, etc. Consequently, Petrarch turns their own meagre biblical culture against them and in the *De otio*[133] writes, "Ve vobis qui saturi estis, quia esurietis";[134] "Si quis sitit, veniat ad me et bibat";[135] "Beati qui lugent, quoniam ipsi consolabuntur".[136] He then reinstates all those who are engaged in battle, whatever this may be, by quoting, "Omnes qui pie volunt vivere in Cristo Iesu persecutionem patientur",[137] and "Beati qui persecutionem patiuntur propter iustitiam, quoniam ipsorum est regnum celorum".[138] It is, therefore, by entering into Petrarchan-style *otium* that one has a better possibility of entering the Kingdom of Heaven.

Petrarch, however, is not dogmatic or harsh with those he is trying to teach. The protreptical nature of the treatise and, indeed, his teaching method, would

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[130] *Cv.*, III, 12,14.
[131] Cf *Par.*, 23, 112-3. See also Vasoli, 1988, pp. 673-674, n. 2.
[132] See n. 380.
[133] The following New Testament quotes are all made in *De otio*, p.592.
[134] *Lc.*, 6, 25.
[135] *Io.*, 7, 37.
[136] *Mt.*, 5, 5.
[137] *Tim.*, II, III, 12.

otherwise have been thwarted. He invites the monks, instead, to re-engage themselves in battle and be persecuted, lest this *otium* make them weaker than they already are. He points out that just as the destruction of Carthage was deleterious for Rome, as in the long term it allowed "securitas, otium et quies" to destroy "rei bellice disciplina et imperii gloria", so too is it true that only in the exercise of virtue against a suitable adversary is it possible to win the prize. Indeed, the quote of Paul, "Nam virtus in infirmitate perficitur"[139] may be adduced as the motto of Petrarch the humanist waging war outside the walls of monasticism.

What Cochin, Mazzotta and Pacca have claimed to be the insoluble antinomy between faith and culture, on the one hand, and *vita contemplativa* and *vita activa*, on the other, must now be re-addressed. The issue is entirely Augustinian, but on two levels. On the first level, Gherardo represents those who have seen Augustinian conversion too simplistically, that is, as a clear-cut dichotomy between a state of pre-conversion in sin or muddy squares and one of post-conversion in some earthly paradise. Petrarch represents a different model of conversion; one which is gradual and intellectual. On the first level, Petrarch is against the Augustinian model of conversion and, therefore, can be defined anti-Augustinian. On the second level, which we shall see very clearly in the chapter on the *Familiares*, Petrarch is profoundly Augustinian. Though contradictory from one point of view, this was Petrarch's way of integrating philosophical systems into his own. Petrarch accepts and remains Augustinian, but refuses the Augustinian concepts of predestination and the pre- and post-conversion dichotomy. Such concepts, so he thought, might lead, as in the case of Gherardo, to intellectual inertia and stop people on the pathway to Christ. It is this appraisal of Petrarchan syncretism that might help explain, for example, the *altercatio* between Franciscus

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[138] *Mt.*, 5, 10.

and Augustinus of the *Secretum*. It might also explain how Petrarch could integrate seemingly incompatible systems, or parts thereof, into his own, such as the Lucretian analysis of classical Hades.

The descent to sin

Christ was believed by many to have descended to hell to rescue the Hebrew Patriarchs and take them with him to Heaven. Christ's *descensus*, however, had also been contested and much debated during the Middle Ages. It became catholic dogma only as late as 1215 at the Fourth Lateran Council. Continuing debate deemed necessary a further papal ratification in 1274 at the Council of Lyon.[140] The *descensus ad inferos* was, therefore, a delicate, topical issue. The long history of uncertainty and debate emerges, for example, in the request for clarification in *If.* IV 46-63, where Dante *agens*, with "parlar coperto", tentatively asks Virgil whether the it had really happened, "uscicci mai alcuno [...]?" Petrarch is not nearly as careful as Dante. He openly and unabashedly refers to this article of faith in the *De otio*.[141] Indeed, I believe that the entire discourse in the *De otio* regarding the *cogitatio mortis* and his reference to classical Hades is a part of his elaboration of Christ-like descent (where the descent takes place within *him*) as an integral part of his personal concept of *imitatio Christi* and *exemplaritas*. Drawing upon the authority of both St Paul and St Thomas, Petrarch believed that Man was made not only in God's image, but also in analogy with the person of Christ, *homo et Deus*, that is, "ex anima rationali et humana carne".[142] Just as Christ had descended from the right

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[139] *Cor.* II, XII,9 in *De otio*, p.614.

[140] For the New Testament and Patristic sources regarding the much-discussed dogma of Christ's descent to hell to free the Patriarchs, see Guidubaldi, pp.384-385.

[141] *De otio*, p.628.

[142] *De otio.*, p.664, "ex anima rationali et humana carne". Cf. St Paul, *Ad Eph.*, 4, 10, "qui descendit ipse est et qui ascendit super omnes caelos ut impleret omnia"; *Ad Eph.*, 4, 32, "estote autem invicem benigni misericordes donantes invicem sicut et Deus in Christo donavit nobis"; *Ad Eph.*, 5, 1-2, "estote ergo imitatores Dei, sicut filii carissimi, et ambulate in dilectione, sicut et Christus dilexit nos

hand of the Father to save humanity from its sins, Petrarch believes that so too must every exemplary *viator-bellator-nauta* descend for the sake of humanity. The whole idea of Petrarch the sinner, established via contrast with Gherardo in the *De otio*, and destined to be crucified, as we shall see in the *Familiaris* IV 1, is part of Petrarch's concept of *imitatio Christi*. He, the *homo peccator exemplaris*, must descend in order to save himself from his *errores* so that humanity in turn may learn how to descend in order to save itself from its own errors. Petrarch establishes a negative *exemplaritas* in order to teach humanity how to rise, through his example, to a greater understanding of God.

Such Petrarchan *imitatio Christi*, however, becomes twofold. On one level, Christ's passion is mirrored in the torments described in Petrarch's *RVF*, *Secretum* and *Psalmi penitentiales*.[143] On another level, Christ's *descensus ad inferos* becomes Petrarch's descent to wage war, outside the mighty walls of Gherardo's second home and New Jerusalem, against the "turbae fantasmatum" of "tumor" and "volubilitas" and his other vices.[144] These "turbulentissime visiones" or "doli",[145] do not allow him (and, therefore, us) to "videre" the perfect unity of the cosmos. Since our eyes are also naturally "lippi et invalidi",[146] and, therefore, cannot grasp the violence of so great a light, it is here that we must put God's gift to the soul, its *ingenium*, to its best use. Petrarch's greatest *bellum* is about correct intellectual vision.

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et tradidit se ipsum pro nobis oblationem et hostiam Deo in odorem suavitatis." For the allusion to Christ as a ram, see *Ex.*, 29, 18. Cf. St Thomas, *Comm. Eth.*, 10-12, "[man is made] compositus ex anima et corpore".

[143] For example, *Psalmus* 6, 8 "Vulneribus gravissimis confecerunt me. Semianimem ac nudum reliquerunt in deserto" & 6, 9 "Caput et pectus meum transfixerunt, sed subter precordia mea debacchati sunt acerbius"; for the verb *bacchari* reminiscent of martyrdom, see Gigliucci, 1997, p.75 n. 6.

[144] *De otio*, p.668.

[145] *ibid.*, p.746.

[146] *ibid.*, p.658.

The descent described in the *De otio* alludes to Petrarch's own life style and Vaucluse. Though more cryptically, it also alludes to his own poetics. In book II, Petrarch confronts the topic of his own descent into the corruption of the flesh. He paraphrases *Psalm* 29 and explains,

> "Que utilitas in sanguine meo, dum descendo in corruptionem?" Et proprie quidem ait "descendo", nulla enim tam prerupta rupes, nullum baratrum tam preceps, nulla crepido montis tam aerei usquam est, unde tantus tamque terribilis sit descensus, quam ex innocentie vertice in abissum peccati: non siquis e summo saxi huius, quod hec scribenti imminet, quo neque altius, ni frustratur extimatio, neque preruptius ullum vidi, cernuus in imum Sorgie fontem cadat.[147] Ut vero huius tanti descensus, seu verius ruine, nulla utilitas, nullus fructus appareat, quamvis ea quoque certior apertiorque res sit quam ut probari aut monstrari egeat, dicam tamen quod in animum revehit res ipsa.[148]

We shall return later to this quote from the *De otio* concerning Petrarch's fall into the Sorgue. Let us now, however, reflect on the fact that it is this very description of Petrarch's own life style and poetics which reiterates the dichotomy between the two brothers. The steepness and the height of the rock-face overhanging the Sorgue are directly proportional to Petrarch's fall into sin. It is here that Petrarch's *bellum* takes place. The expression, "Ut vero huius tanti descensus, seu verius ruine, nulla utilitas, nullus fructus appareat" seems now decidedly spurious, for it is here that Petrarch hopes to refine his virtue and his poetics, and thus reach God.

Such descent to the foot of the cliff overhanging the Sorgue is not necessarily a 'sinful' position at all, inasmuch as it can also be a way of securing Christ's presence in one's life. That is to say, King David had pointed out that even

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[147] The term "cernuus" [headlong] reminds us of *Aen.* X 894, "implicat, eiectoque incumbit cernuus armo", where Virgil describes the end of the bloody battle between Trojans and Latini. Aeneas hurls a spear which pierces the head of Mezentius' horse which then throws the Etruscan and falls headlong upon him. Paratore (Paratore, 1982, pp.306-7) points out that this is the only locus in Virgil where the term "cernuus" appears. The term itself was borrowed from the II century b.C. Roman satirist, Gaius Lucilius (v.124 ed. Terzaghi-Mariotti).

[148] *De otio*, p.734. *Psalm* 30 (29) "Thanksgiving after mortal danger" where "my blood" obviously stands for "my death", and where "the Pit" translates Jerome's "corruptio" which in turn translated

in this seemingly deathly descent, God will be there to protect him: "Si ambulavero in medio umbre mortis, non timebo mala quoniam tu mecum es".[149] And seeing that Petrarch *does* indeed descend into the shadow of death, lest he should remain trapped there, he knows that he only need call on Christ's help. This is one of the main functions of the *Psalmi penitentiales*, as we can see in the lines, "eripe me de faucibus inferni!",[150] and "Illic [*scil.* in celo] habitat redemptor meus, qui potens est ab infernis evellere".[151] Petrarch reiterates the same concept in the first letter he sends to his brother.[152] Here Petrarch writes, "Nam "et si ascendero in celum, illic est, et si descendero in infernum, adest". Omnia igitur coram Illo non *quasi* spectante sed *vere* spectante faciamus."[153] In other words, even by descending to a sinful state, such as writing his love poetry on the banks of the Sorgue in Vaucluse, Petrarch is assured of the presence of Christ in his life.

Hugh of St-Victor of Paris

I pointed out above[154] that a manuscript containing Petrarch's *De otio religioso* was owned by the Abbaye St-Victor of Paris.[155] This is intriguing because the Victorines are Augustinian. Indeed, the most famous Victorine, Hugh of St-Victor, head of the School of St Victor from 1133 to 1140, was, in fact, so Augustinian in thought that he earned the title of *alter Augustinus*. And yet the Victorines accepted the implicit anti-Augustinian stance adopted in the *De otio* by Petrarch. I believe that a possible reason for such acceptance was Petrarch's model of descent.

"λακκος", meaning deep hole, pit or grave.

[149] In *De otio*, p.796 Petrarch quotes *Psalm* 23 (22) 4 "The Good Shepherd"; in Jerome and the Septuagint there is respectively "in valle umbrae mortis" and "εν κοιλαδι σκιας θανατον", that is, "the valley of the shadow of death", also present in Job 10, 21-22 and Isaiah 50,10; cf. *De otio*, pp.734, 742.

[150] *Ps. pen.*, I 27.

[151] *Ps. pen.*, II 3.

[152] *Fam.*, X 3.

[153] *Fam.*, X 3, 49 (the italics are mine).

[154] See n. 51.

Indeed, one of the main thrusts of Hugh's twelfth-century treatise, *De Arrha animae*, is the idea of the salvific nature of *descent* into the realm of sin and "false and fleeting love". Hugh of St Victor writes (*PL* t.176, cols. 951-970)

> The bad are allowed to live among the good, so that [*scil.* the good], seeing [*scil.* the bad] deprived of divine grace and rushing through every dangerous path of vice, may learn what thanks they should return to their Creator for their salvation (Sherwood Taylor, 1945, p.17):
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> [...]
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> Now in a way I [*scil.* the soul] begin to love my fault; for, as I see, it has been of no small advantage to me to have done evil, since thereby he has made clearer to me than light what I used to long to know through all my prayers. O happy is my fault (*felix culpa*) when he is drawn by charity to forgive it; for that charity which is also his is made manifest to me who long for it and desire it with all my heart. Never would I have known his love so well, had I not tried it in such perils. How happy I was to fall, who have risen the happier from my falling...". (Sherwood Taylor, 1945, p.25)

The soul then weeps with yet another gift that God has bestowed on her – the "tears wherewith again to wash [her]self"(Sherwood Taylor, 1945, p.32).

> Such is the love of God towards us [that] there is nothing that human weakness bears which he does not dispose to our good (Sherwood Taylor 1945, p.34).

In this light, Hugh of St Victor states in *De sacramentis* I, IV, xix-xx that the greater good is that from which there is a greater good, which means that even a fall or descent can be good provided it leads to a greater knowledge of God. In the *De Arrha animae*, in fact, Hugh states that "this is the greatest feature of your betrothal gift, [...] that you may know how sweet He is"(Sherwood Taylor 1945, p.39).

The concepts contained in the parts of Hugh's work, such as tears, errors, human weakness, fall and descent, could easily be found in any critical essay on Petrarch's *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*. The idea that the fall into sin, that is, Petrarch's 'giovenile errore', has afforded the poet the chance to record in writing

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[155] Pellegrin, 1966, pp.409-411.

the story of his own exemplary redemption in progress, is immediately evident. The idea that Petrarch's bitter tears actually denote a heightening of his philosophical discourse via "sweet" Ciceronian *otium* (nihil dulcius otio litterato)[156] is also, by now, a given. We can conclude that Petrarch's concept of descent, and, therefore, his anti-Augustinianism (refusal of the concepts of predestination and pre-/post-conversion scheme), were thoroughly compatible with the neo-Augustinian concepts of the Victorines.

Barlaam

As we have seen, such descent, according to Petrarch, must be active. Such active descent was what Barlaam, whom Petrarch knew,[157] had been promulgating throughout the 1340s in a bid to overcome the schism between Catholicism and Orthodoxy. Intellectual descent was, therefore, an issue of no little importance. Barlaam, the former professor of theology and patristic exegesis in Constantinople, later excommunicated by the Greeks for supposed Catholic tendencies in support of the Latin *Filioque* clause, always held in his writings that the human intellect is incapable of proving or confuting the supposed procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son. Barlaam tries to re-unite the Catholic and Orthodox Churches by repeating this simple concept – divine problems are above every rational demonstration and, therefore, not up to us, but only to God the Father.[158]

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[156] *Tusc.* 5, 36.

[157] Cf. *Fam.*, XVIII 2, 7-10; *Fam.*, XXIV 12, 35; *De ign.*, 4, 12; *Sen.*, XI 9.

[158] The entire controversy regarding the theological demonstration of the same is essentially one of method implicitly based on the Aristotelian assumption that understanding presupposes the employment of the senses. The mystery of the Holy Trinity is well beyond human experience. The schism, therefore, between Greek Orthodoxy and Latin Catholicism is over matters which simply do not concern us. Seeing that all Christians agreed that the Holy Spirit proceeded *ex Patre*, Barlaam suggested that all of Christendom should continue believing this as the common denominator. If any single person wanted to believe that it proceeded also from the Son, *Filioque*, they should be allowed to do so, but only in the quiet of their own heart (cf. Gemmiti, 1989, pp.100, 108-109, 114, 130). Such a simple, yet profound solution to the schism did not, however, resolve it. It does, *a posteriori*, point

Indeed, throughout the *De otio*, even when apparently treating matters of an eschatological nature, he states that he is dealing with strictly human concerns,[159] whilst leaving the more explicitly spiritual things up to the angels.

Barlaam was very scathing about those who persisted in trying to contemplate the uncontemplable through absurd means. One such means was hesychasm.[160] This school of thought sought to invoke Christ via a method known as omphaloscopy. For Barlaam, the *omphalopsychi*, who were also known as *umbilicanimi*, were absolutely crazy and/or presumptuously proud. It was absurd to think that Christ could be invoked through some umbilical link.[161] In this light, it would be tempting to hypothesize that Barlaam had spoken about his crusade against the *omphalopsychi* during the daily discussions he had with Petrarch in the summer of 1342.[162] It was between the June and September of 1342 that Barlaam taught Petrarch his first notions of Greek in exchange for Latin lessons.[163] Through the *Familiares*, which we shall see in a separate chapter, it is possible to glean that Petrarch felt some resentment for the "abduction" of Gherardo by mighty *Cartusia* in the April of the same year.[164] In this light, during their summer lessons and conversations we might imagine that Barlaam and Petrarch had joked about the brethren of Montrieux as *omphalopsychi*, that is, that Gherardo was somehow wasting his time by simply contemplating his navel.

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out that the schism was, after all, political and not really theological at all. Barlaam, therefore, was right. The problem was with men, not with divinity.

[159] *De otio*, p.670, "nos humana tractemus".

[160] Cf. Also Constable, *Monachisme*, 1979, p.6.

[161] Gemmiti, 1989, pp.123-126.

[162] Cf. Lo Parco, 1905 & Fyrigos & Cortesi, 1989, pp.179-200.

[163] *ibid.*, p.136. cf. *De ign.*, IV 12, "[...] precipue apud Barlaam Calabrum, modernum graie specimen sophie; qui me latinarum inscium docere grecas literas adortus, forsitan profecisset, nisi michi illum invidisset mors, honestisque principiis obstitisset, ut solita est"; *Fam.*, XVIII 2, 7-10.

[164] See discussion below of *Fam.*, IX 2, 3.

Descensus intellectualis via ad celum est

According to Petrarch, Gherardo was not only wasting his time. He had possibly fallen into a trap set by the devil! This is the underlying message contained in Petrarch's quote and discussion of Matthew. He writes:

> "Generatio mala et adultera **signum** querit et signum non dabitur ei".[165] Optat adversarius noster non ut discamus, cui ignorantia nostra gratissima, scire nostrum permolestum est, sed ut secum confundamur, qui audivit a Domino: "Vade retro Sathanas; scriptum est enim non tentabis Dominum Deum tuum".[166]

That ignorance was connected to the devil was a commonplace of the time. It also appears, for example, in the *Comentum* to Dante's *Commedia* by Benvenuto da Imola, who writes, "in Deo est summa sapientia, in isto [*scil.* diabolo] summa ignorantia".[167]

For Petrarch the "signum" is again the *descensus Christi ad inferos* and the ultimate victory of His Resurrection. Petrarch implicitly criticizes the Carthusian monks of being part of this "generatio mala", inasmuch as they cannot properly see or read the signs. They allow their ignorance to be used by the Devil for whom learning (*scire*) would be greatly deleterious. In other words, Carthusian *otium* (Montrieux-style), according to Petrarch, was an instrument of the Devil.

One could argue, perhaps, that Gherardo and his new brothers were justified in their decision not to study "littere inanes". What need was there for such letters in their duties such as praising the Lord, cooking, fashioning cooking utensils and gardening? There was, after all, a historical and cultural justification for such "blind" faith within the safe walls of monasticism. Many great famous religious persons before Gherardo had strenuously fought against such "vain learning" on the

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[165] Here, *De otio*, p.684, Petrarch quotes the first synoptic gospel, *Mt.* XII, 39, regarding the sign of Jonah; "Just as Jonah was in the belly of the sea-monster for three days and three nights, (see *Is.*42:1-4) so will the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights".

[166] *Mt.* IV, 10, 7.

[167] *Comentum ad If.* XXXIV 37-63.

strength of Christ's invitation to be like the innocent children who alone shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven.[168] After all, was not the Rock of the Church and first pope but a lowly, uneducated fisherman?

For Petrarch, however, this justification is unacceptable. Even the most humble mendicant from Assisi, St Francis, had continued writing (or dictating) texts both in Latin and in his specific Umbrian vernacular, such as his many *epistolae* and the magnificent *Canticum fratris Solis*. At the end of the thirteenth century, Jacopone da Todi had also carried on in the founder's footsteps. Jacopone does, however, curse his fellow Franciscans who were teaching at the *Studium* of Paris,[169] but this was primarily because they had forgotten Francis's precept of "umilitade". Jacopone himself continues, even after his conversion, to meditate on and indeed use the cultural baggage he had acquired beforehand as a lawyer and notary. He wrote works of poetry and meditated on mysticism and Church doctrine.

As I pointed out in the introduction, Gherardo had acquired a higher education at the *Studium Bononiense*. It was similar to that of both Jacopone and his brother Francesco, but, compared to these and many others, Gherardo had done very little with his learning. If *Cartusia* tried to justify itself calling upon the Petrine tradition of illiteracy, Petrarch retorts, in the *De otio*, that it is simply not enough to sing praises to the Lord. Not only do the Carthusians allow their ignorance to be used by the devil (optat adversarius non ut discamus), but they also allow him to hinder their journey to Christ: "Cristum laudando [*scil.* diabolus] impedire cogitet vestrum iter, quo ad Cristum pervenitur."[170] Here, Petrarch makes a clear distinction between the praising *of* Christ and the *iter ad Cristum*. By cultivating intellectual

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[168] *Mt.*, 18, 3; *Lc.*, 18, 15-7.

[169] Jacopone criticizes, for example, a certain Fra' Ranaldo, who represents these learned Franciscans, for running the risk of forgetting that he was, above all, supposed to be a "menore fratecello desprezato" (see Jacopone da Todi, "O fra Ranaldo, do' èi andato? De quolibet hai disputato…?).

[170] *De otio* p.670.

otiositas rather than *otium litteratum*, and by only vacuously praising the Lord, Gherardo and his fellow Carthusian monks are easy prey for the devil. Conversely, by remaining the self-excluded sinner and constantly exerting his intellect, Petrarch exemplifies the way in which it might be possible to actually *reach* Christ. Petrarchan *otium* is both a prophylactic against the devil and a pathway to Christ.

It is in the paradigm of intellectual descent, therefore, that the *discrimen* between the two brothers becomes most operative. Despite the God-imposed limits of the human mind, like Dante and St Thomas before him, Petrarch believes that it is part of God's plan that man should seek to raise his being to the highest degree humanly possible. Dante had written that "l'uomo si dee traere a le divine cose, quanto può".[171] This can only be achieved by cultivating the mind which is "quella fine e preziosissima parte de l'anima che è deitade".[172] Dante believes that whoever decides not to open up his mind by studying privately or by frequenting the various new *Studia*, whether these be close by or far off, is simply abominable.[173] Consequently, the Carthusian decision not to seek a 'vain literary culture' is also abominable. Petrarch's appraisal of Montrieux regards, therefore, the acquisition of knowledge, or gnoseology. If Gherardo represents a commonly-believed, fourteenth-century fallacy about divine hermeneutics, then the model of conversion that Petrarch is propounding is not about entering or not entering the cloister, or about donning or not donning a habit, but rather, about effecting a true shift in gnoseology.

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[171] *Cv.*, IV, XIII, 8, which is a paraphrase of Arist., *Eth.*, X, II and St Thomas *Summa Contra Gent.*, I, 5.

[172] *Cv.*, III, II, 19.

More on Montrieux's intellectual *otiositas*

Cochin[174] points out that in Montrieux there was an elementary type of *seminarium* with "librorum bona copia".[175] In the following analysis of the *Familiares*, we shall see how the expression, "a copious amount of books," is to be considered, as it is in the *De remediis*,[176] a negative hyperbole. This point, together with many other clues Petrarch leaves in the *Familiares*, indicates a real poverty of scholarship in Montrieux. *Cartusia* had transformed Gherardo from a promising latter-day Italian troubadour and law student into a lowly monk incapable of expressing independent thought. Indeed, it is possible that Petrarch was thinking of Dante's "ignavi" who "hanno perduto il ben dell'intelletto".[177] The aim of Petrarch's work, therefore, would be to save Gherardo from his own intellectual sloth.

During his first visit to Montrieux in 1347, Petrarch had realised his brother's monastery did not contain any books whatsoever by Lactantius or Cicero. Cochin was obviously wrong to overestimate the monastic dedication to literary culture. It is an almost shocked Petrarch who rather harshly writes that he does not remember having seen any of these books with the Carthusians – "apud vos autem nullos [*scil.* libros] esse meminerim".[178] Petrarch thought it shameful not to have on

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[173] *Cv.*, I, I, 3-5; Freccero (Freccero, 1986, p.226), points out that "education is the process whereby the star-soul, fallen to earth, struggles to regain its celestial home".
[174] Cochin, 1975, pp.98-99.
[175] *Fam.*, XVI 9, 16.
[176] *De rem.*, I 8-10.
[177] *If.* III 18. The reference to Dante's "ignavi" of the Antinferno, who are not 'dead' because they were never really alive, is even more striking thanks to Sapegno's quote of *Apoc.*, 3, 15. The same section of the *Apocalypse* appears at the end of the *De otio* (p.808). For Dante's "ignavia" semantically connected to Gherardo's "otium", cf. *Fam.*, I 8, 6, "Ego vero nichil magis cavendum arbitror, quam ne **ignavia** consenescat ingenium" & §18, "**otii** fructum sperandum esse proponimus [...] hiems **ignava** colono". See also Cic., *inv.*, 1, 22, "eorum inertia, neglegentia, **ignavia**, desidiosum studium et luxuriosum **otium**"; Seneca *Luc.*, 55,4, "at ille latere sciebat, non vivere. Multum autem interest utrum vita tua **otiosa** sit an **ignava**. [...] **otiosum** enim hominem seductum existimat vulgus et securum et se contentum, sibi viventem, quorum nihil ulli contingere nisi sapienti potest"; Stat., *Theb.*, 10, 224, "indignata iuventus [...], cur **ignava** [...] servent **otia**". *Mt.*, 20, 6, "circa undecimam vero exiit et invenit alios stantes et dicit illis quid hic statis tota die **otiosi**. Dicunt ei quia nemo nos conduxit"; Aug., *civ.*, 12, 18, "nec **ignavum otium**, praesertim tam longae sine initio diuturnitatis, Deo tribuitur".
[178] *De otio*, p.770.

one's shelves at least Cicero, whose *Hortensius*[179] had been at the base of Augustine's conversion to philosophy. Petrarch will also allude to this work again in the *Familiares*. Cicero's extant works were themselves the founding models of much of the Scholastic tradition. More shameful still was the fact that the Carthusians did not even have Lactantius, a Church Father whose *Divinae Institutiones* written under the first Christian emperor, Constantine, had practically founded most of mediaeval Christian doctrine. In Cicero's *Tusculanae disputationes*,[180] *De natura deorum* and *De divinatione*, together with Lactantius's *Divinae Institutiones*, the Christian Middle Ages had the theoretical foundation necessary to definitively confute polytheism. I shall address this issue of learning about the foundations of Christianity in the section on euhemerism. Let us, for the moment, simply mention the fact that pagan authors and early Fathers of the Church had realised the true function of *religio*: religion is a political device used to maintain the status quo and, therefore, the privileges of the few. By reading these works, which Montrieux did not possess, one learns both about the mechanisms governing society and the very foundations of Christianity.[181]

The *Consuetudines* written out by Dom Guigues were respected by the Grande Chartreuse, which was famous for the transcription and collation of classical and mediaeval manuscripts.[182] The smaller Charterhouse in Montrieux, on the contrary, must have been exactly as Petrarch points it out to be in his letter to Zanobi, a "direptum Cristi tugurium".[183] Sadly enough, this must also have been a suitable place for Gherardo who, inasmuch as he was only *clericus redditus*, was

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[179] This particular protreptic work by Cicero had, however, been lost.
[180] In *De otio*, p.768, Petrarch writes "Tusculanarum questionum liber".
[181] *De otio*, p.760.
[182] Cochin, 1975, p.102.
[183] *Fam.*, XVI 9, 17.

officially recognised by the Carthusian order as *not* having the theological preparation necessary even to become a regular monk.[184]

The key to Petrarch's objection to Gherardo's non-literary *otium* would appear to lie in Petrarch's sharing of Dante's gnoseological stance - Knowledge has an anagogical value inasmuch as "la nostra fede aiuta".[185] If ever assailed by doubt, without the comforting and illuminating auxiliary of instruments of sound knowledge, Gherardo and his fellow brothers would literally be lost. Ever since the redaction of the *Regula sancti Benedicti*, it had been common knowledge that "Otiositas inimica est animae".[186] In early Benedictine settlements, certain hours of the day, therefore, were dedicated to manual work, certain others to be spent "in lectione divina". At certain times of the year, especially during Lent, according to St Benedict every monk should even make a point of reading every single book kept in the monastic library. St Benedict considered this as important as manual labour.[187] Obviously certain habits had been lost.

We may conclude that, according to Petrarch, by not studying and by only praising Christ, the monks of Montrieux actually help the devil thwart their greater salvation. It is because of this that, in the first book of the *De otio*, Petrarch has gently tried to persuade the Carthusians of the need to re-assess their position as Christians with respect to the *iter intellectuale ad Cristum*. It is also my hypothesis, however, that Petrarch somehow felt this approach not to be sufficient. I suggest that this is why he added the second book to the *De otio* and why this second book opens with an allusion to classical Hades. Hades, in fact, at least if analysed in a certain way according to post-modernist theory, is the perfect metaphor for

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[184] Cochin, 1975, p.96.
[185] *Cv.*, III,VII, 16. Knowledge enhances our faith by bringing it closer and closer to the ineffability of God whilst protecting it from the devil.
[186] *Reg.*, 192, *P.L.*, 103, 550, cit. also in Leclercq, 1963, p. 41.
[187] *Regula sancti Benedicti* XLVIII, *De opera manuum cotidiana*, 1, 9, 15.

historicisation, mythification and, indeed, de-mythification.[188] After all, in one of his last *Familiares*, Petrarch points out to Virgil, as if he were directly speaking to him, that Christ, the *summus Rex*, had laid waste the Stygian and Tartarean realms of the cosmos – the *descensus Christi ad inferos*.[189] What better way now to be an exemplary *miles Christi*, to emulate Christ and thus to be a true Christian, than to lay waste the murky realms of one's inner Babylonian self, that is, the microcosmos, and conquer the one's own Tartarean *fantasmata*?[190] That is to say, Petrarch feels that his responsibility as a Christian towards Christ was not to descend *ad inferos* as Christ had done, or even to poetically feign such a descent as Dante had done in the *Commedia*. Petrarch's responsibility as an *imitator Christi* was to descend to the Augustinian *homo interior* in order to analyse and then flush out all sin. Self-knowledge is after all, as Petrarch will write in his letter, *Posteritati*, an order from God.[191] In other words, the exquisitely Renaissance concept of man as the reflection of the cosmos, that is, the microcosm with respect to the macrocosm, is already present in Petrarch. The intrinsic value of such a purging descent was not egotistical or solipsistic. Inasmuch as Petrarch could present himself as *exemplaris*, that is, as an example for all humanity to follow, meant that his own personal *imitatio Christi* was a part of his teaching method. Others, including the Carthusians, could learn more about salvation theory by listening to Petrarch the sinner and by imitating *him*.

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[188] Pike, 1997, p.xi *et passim*.

[189] *Fam.*, XXIV 11, 23-24, "Post Stygios raptus spoliataque Tartara, summi/ Regis ad adventum, magno certamine victor".

[190] *Fantasma* is a term which Petrarch derives from Macr. *somn.* I 3, 2 as a synonym for *somnia* or *simulacra*. Through Petrarch's reading of St Augustine, the term will also designate his psychological worries.

[191] *Post.*, pp. 3-4, "imo etatum temporumque omnium Conditor, qui miseros mortales de nichilo tumidos aberrare sinit interdum, ut peccatorum suorum vel sero memores se se cognoscant".

A possible implicit Lucretian model

In this section I shall be discussing certain elements contained in the incipital pages of the second book of *De otio*, such as layout, lexis, images and grammatical structures. There would seem to be a striking parallel and ideological coherence between the systematic use of structures and references adopted by Petrarch, and Lucretius's analysis of infernal punishment contained in Book three of *De rerum natura*. The problem here, however, is that the first manuscript containing the *De rerum natura* was not officially re-discovered until the beginning of the fifteenth century by Poggio Bracciolini in St Gallen, that is, approximately sixty years *after* Petrarch had written the *De otio*. The manuscript tradition, which is not central to my central argument conerning Petrarch's relationship with his brother, will be treated in a special Appendix.

Petrarch makes his second visit to Gherardo in 1353 and realises that his exhortations had not prompted Gherardo into humanistic action. This was the last time he would ever see his younger brother again. Given the fact that in such a monastery a guest could stay up to three consecutive days, Petrarch's visit of only one day and one night becomes a measure of his despair. While Gherardo on the one hand does not even dare to make any personal comment on standard, traditionally accepted texts, Petrarch, quite on the other hand, bases his thoughts on texts which were considered diametrically and dangerously in contrast with accepted Christian thought. He analyses the traditional punishments of Graeco-Etruscan-Roman eschatology as a metaphor of humanity's greatest fears and most cherished fallacies. These fears and fallacies do not concern the pagans as much as they do Petrarch's fellow Christians. This is a dramatic, colourful and learned example of a *reductio ad unum* of pre-Christian and Christian thought, which propounds Petrarch's humanistic philosophy without explicitly offending and

attacking any contemporary person or institution. Those who are capable of understanding the implicit message will simply do so - *qui potest capere capiat.*[192]

The principal metaphor used in book two of Petrarch's *De otio religioso* concerns the ever-flowing waters of the river of Babylon. The metaphor itself is drawn from the Hebrew-Christian tradition but in the light of the major re-elaborations by St Augustine,[193] Joachim of Fiore, Pier de Jean Olieu and Dante. These last writers saw Rome on the Tiber and Avignon on the Rhone as latter-day "Babylonian" cities of sin. It is in such waters, Petrarch writes, that we can best observe the real nature of a river whose "water flows and stands still; the waters flow but the river remains".[194] Petrarch draws on Solomon,[195] Heraclitus[196] and Seneca[197] whom he explicitly mentions in his discussion of the "aque metaphora".[198]

The 'water-metaphor' not only refers to human life, as in the Senecan description of the body as a "fleeting thing",[199] but also to cities. Just like a river, "we can enter and not enter the same city twice".[200] Analogously, certain beliefs, though held as solid and unquestionable, are also subject to change. Indeed, in the light of the current argument, it is possible to see the water-metaphor applied by Petrarch to an entire belief system, in this case, that of the ancient superstitions regarding Hades. What the more discerning reader should understand, however, is that the implicit reference is to any dogmatic belief regarding *religio*, *sapientia* and

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[192] *De otio*, p.598; The enigmatic invitation for an elite to understand is used again by Petrarch with reference to Virgil in *Fam.*, XV, 5, 8.
[193] Aug., *conf.*, 2, 3, 8, *in Ps.*, 136 2, 5-6.
[194] *De otio*, p.702, "Hec est fluminis enim natura: fugit et stat; aque fugiunt, flumen manet".
[195] *Eccl.*, II, 11 "convertissem me ad universa quae fecerant manus meae et ad laborem in quo frustra sudaveram, vidi in omnibus vanitatem et afflictionem spiritus, et nichil permanere sub sole." cit. in *De otio*, p.696.
[196] Paraphrased here by Seneca.
[197] *Ad Lucil.*, 12, 7; 58, 2, "Manet enim idem flumnis nomen; aqua transmissa est" cit. in *De otio*, p.702. And *Ad Lucil.*, 58, 23, "In amne manifestius est quam in homine, sed nos quoque non minus velox cursus praetervehit" cit. in *De otio*, p.704.
[198] *De otio*, p.708.
[199] *Ad Lucil.*, 58, 23 cit. in *De otio*, p.704.
[200] *De otio*, p.706. Petrarch's thought is similar, therefore, to Dante's consideration of linguistic change discussed in *VE.*, I, 9; *Cv.*, I, v, 9.

felicitas.

In the second book of the *De otio*, Petrarch attempts to dispel some of the confusion by analysing "illae inferni fabulae".[201] He thus develops a substantially correct Christianized etymologization of the names of the rivers of Hades in which the souls of the living, and not of the dead, are immersed. Petrarch draws his etymologization not from some mediaeval source, such as Isidore of Seville or Uguccione da Pisa,[202] but, rather, from the Latin classics directly. We shall see later who these classical writers are. Petrarch writes that the *infelices* of Hades have drawn forgetfulness of their better qualities from Lethe, boiling anger and desire from Phlegethon, futile penance and pain from Acheron, causes for mourning and tears from Cocytus and enmity and hate from the Styx. For Petrarch these are all only facets of the one "Babilonis flumen".[203] Petrarch also interprets the torments of hell. The thirst of Tantalus can be excruciating for the soul, the rock of the Lapithes terrifies it, the boulder of Sisyphus wearies it, the vulture of Tityos gnaws at its liver and Ixion's wheel of torture spins it round and round.[204] Cochin[205] detects something new in this Petrarchan interpretation of the rivers of Hell but does not offer any hypotheses for the novelty.[206]

Similarly, Boccaccio will write that we are transported through life by Charon upon the Acheron. The infernal river is a metaphor for our fleeting lives full of misery[207] or sadness.[208] Analogously, Petrarch describes man in his Babylonian

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[201] *De otio*, p.702.

[202] Isidore of Seville (*orig.*, 14, 9, 5-9) does not mention Lethe or Phlegethon whereas Petrarch does. Furthermore, the order in which Isidore presents the constituents of hell is very different from Petrarch's.

[203] *De otio*, p.722 *et passim.*

[204] *De otio*, p.702.

[205] Cochin, 1975, p.182.

[206] For a bibliography on other mediaeval afterlife accounts, and for a discussion of Mussato's *Somnium*, see Feo, 1990, 115-147.

[207] Boccaccio *Gen. deo. gent.* 303, "Vehimur preterea a Charone per Acherontem fluvium, qui absque gaudio interpretatur, ut advertamus, quoniam a tempore trahimur per vitam labilem et miseriis plenam."

existence as constantly "occupatus" in a "bellum sine indutiis", where there is no "thalamus", "cubile" or "portus" which might put a stop to the "tempestas imaginum". Happiness in the human condition is not, however, to be sought in some type of *otium* which would try to work against God's plan as a sort of antithetical *modus vivendi*. The *vulgus*, however, has exactly this type of erroneous conception of true happiness which is often in contrast with Petrarch's idea of true *felicitas*.[209] According to Petrarch, those who have had special gifts given to them by God will always find themselves "in perpetuis laboribus".[210] This is also the key to correctly understanding the *Secretum* III and Augustinus's criticism of the "locorum mutatio" (in the sense of *peregrinatio*) bringing about greater "labor".[211] Greatness and glory have high prices, usually one's entire existence, body and soul.[212] Petrarch is prepared to pay this price, and in so doing, becomes the poet we know him as today.

In the *De otio religioso liber primus* Petrarch had already alluded to certain eschatological matters. From the *Book of Wisdom* Petrarch quotes, "ut scirent quia, per quae peccat quis, per haec et torquetur".[213] Those who avidly and vainly work in this life will only find that they will have to work just as feverishly in the life to come.[214] Here Petrarch had also added that certain "poetae gentiles, or "docti homines",[215] held exactly the same view as the *Book of Wisdom*. In other words, there was a natural, historical parallel between Judaeo-Christian thought and pagan thought. This parallel is fundamental in Petrarch's humanism and, as such, will

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[208] *De flum.*, 18, "Hunc poete inferorum dicunt fluvium, eo quod liventibus evehatur undis et eius nomen sonet 'tristitia'".
[209] *Fam.*, XIII 4, 7, "Felicitati contraria sunt hec que felicia vulgus vocat".
[210] *Fam.*, XIII 4, 11.
[211] *Secr.* III, pp.206-207, "Aug.: Quia malum suum circumferenti **locorum mutatio** laborem cumulat, non tribuit sanitatem". But also notice that the "coniecta cerva sagitta" of *Aen.*, IV 69-73 to which Petrarch compares himself "peragrat".
[212] *Fam.*, XIII 4, 12, "Parvo magna non constant [...] totum te poscat in precium".
[213] *Sap.*, 11, 17 cit. in *De otio*, p.586.
[214] *De otio*, p.586.

appear several times in the ensuing discussion.

The greatest of these pagan poets was of course Virgil whose "lugentes campi" were inhabited by those who had died for love.[216] Just when Aeneas is about to rediscover Dido wandering about in the infernal wood with the wound still fresh in her breast, Petrarch directly quotes Virgil's "curae non ipsa in morte relinquunt". Analogously, those who had fought all their lives will continue to practise with their javelins, horses and chariots. We, together with Petrarch, might immediately think of the parallel with Dante's steadfast law of "contrapasso" which will not prevent Paolo and Francesca from running through eternity together. Francesca will also never abandon the thought of her husband's vindictive act, whose "modo ancor offende".

On the topic of "mortis anxietudo atque inclementia", more commonly and generically called "comunes mortalium omnium metus omnes", which are not deferential to anyone's glory or power, Petrarch praises someone particular as "felix". This lucky individual has been able to overcome inexorable fate, the uproar of greedy Acheron, the confusion of the world, and the terrifying abyss.[217] Petrarch explicitly alludes here to the famous lines from Virgil's *Georgics* II (490-3):

> Felix, qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas / Atque metus
> omnis et inexorabile fatum/ subiecit pedibus strepitumque
> Acherontis avari./ Fortunatus et ille, deos qui novit agrestis

These are also exactly the same lines which Petrarch quotes with the same intention at the end of his *Epistola familiaris* IV I describing the ascent of Mt Ventoux.[218] As I have already ascertained, the main *poeta gentilis* is Virgil, but this *felix*? Given the obvious reference to *De rerum natura* in the "rerum [...] causas", the exquisitely

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[215] *ibid.*, p.722.
[216] *Aen.*, 6, 444, 652-655.
[217] *De otio*, p.654.
[218] *Fam.*, IV 1, 34.

Epicurean term "inexorabile", and the direct attack on all superstition, the well-known contrast between "Felix" of line 490 and "Fortunatus" of line 493 has been traditionally interpreted as the homage which Virgil pays to his old comrade in Epicurean arms, Lucretius.[219] Let us briefly pause on this Virgilian homage to Lucretius.

In his early Neapolitan period, Virgil, like Horace, had embraced the Epicurean philosophy taught by Philodemus in Herculaneum. Lucretius seems, rather, to have directly created his Epicurean framework from Epicurus's books. In his "Felix qui potuit...", Virgil may have wanted to leave an echo of regret for not having had the philosophical strength (or authorisation from Maecenas) to more closely emulate the great iconoclastic poet of nature. If this is true, then *felicitas* indicates the ability to see beyond the convention of things and to descend to the very causes of every phenomenon.[220] It was *fortuna*, on the other hand, to be able to content oneself with the accepted conventions and continue singing about the traditional pantheon, old Silvanus, Pan, and their sisters the nymphs. In other words, the *homo fortunatus* accepted standard *religio*. This *vita fortunata*, however, had its price. It meant having to bow down to power, to suffer at the hands of warring citizens and enemies of the State, to shed tears for the miserable and to envy the wealthy. It also implicitly meant having to accept one's fate in the afterworld, in a word, the uproar of greedy Acheron. Whilst Virgil defines himself as *fortunatus*, he envies Lucretius's wisdom and courage, which effectively brought him *felicitas*.

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[219] Cf. *Fam.*, XXIII 19, 17, "cum Homero, Ennio, Lucretio multisque aliis multa sepe rapuerit [*scil.* Vigil], ego sibi non rapui, sed modicum aliquid inadvertens tuli".

[220] This term, as in the case of Sulla's *cognomen ex virtute* had little to do with "happiness" per se. The adjective is, instead, etymologically linked to other terms such as *fetus*, *fecundus*, *fertilis*, *ferax*, *fero*, that is, the derivatives of the Indoeuropean root *fer-* meaning "to bring forth", "to be fruitful". Much more than Horace's "Beatus ille" (Hor., *Ep.*, 2, 1), *felix* was he who advanced civilization, who ameliorated the general standard of life, bringing about peace and prosperity. Latin *cognomina ex virtute*, sometimes confused with *agnomina* or *signa*, were conferred after demonstrations of exceptional virtue such as military victory, eg. *P. Cornelius Scipio Africanus, Pompeus Magnus*, or political prowess, eg. *L. Cornelius Sulla Felix dictator,* see Calabi Limentani 1985, pp.159 & 243.

For his analysis of Hades, Petrarch had also obviously consulted Virgil's *Aeneid* VI in his own edition which also had Servius's commentary. Servius also adduces Lucretius as the utmost authority of any analysis regarding *supplitia infernalia*. Servius writes (*Aen.*, 6, 596, ed. Thilo-Hagen);

> Sane de his omnibus rebus mire reddit rationem Lucretius[221] et confirmat in nostra vita esse omnia quae finguntur ex inferis. Dicit namque Tityon amorem esse, hoc est libidinem, quae secundum physicos et medicos in iecore est, sicut risus in splene, iracundia in felle: unde exesum a vulture dicitur in poenam renasci: etenim libidini non satis fit re semel peracta, sed recrudescit semper, unde ait Horatius «incontinentis aut Tityi iecur».[222] Ipse etiam Lucretius dicit per eos, super quos casurus inminet lapis, superstitiosos significari, qui inaniter semper verentur et de diis et caelo superioribus male opinantur: nam religiosi sunt qui per reverentiam timent. Per eos autem qui saxum volvunt ambitum vult et repulsam significari, quia semel repulsi petitores ambire non desinunt. Per rotam autem negotiatores ostendit, qui semper tempestatibus turbinibusque volvuntur.[223]

In other words, Servius has realised that Virgil's sixth book was to be understood from within an Epicurean framework. Without counting Ennius, whose extant fragments contain no explicit reference to this topic, the first major Epicurean eschatologist in Latin was indeed Lucretius. As paraphrased in the Servian exegesis, Lucretius considers Hades as an allegory of human anguish. The huge overhanging (*impendens*) rock above Tantalus is "divom metus inanis",[224] which he also calls *religio* or superstition. Such *religio* can even overcome those noble human qualities, such as pity, empathy and respect, which we could summarize with the term "pietas". Through the interference of the priestly caste which hurls its threats

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[221] Lucr., 3, 978 = *GLK* II 27,4 (Priscianus).
[222] Hor., *Carm.*, III, iv, 77.
[223] I quote from Petrarch's own copy of Servius, ie. *Vergilius Ambrosianus*, fol.141v.. Petrarch's own gloss to Servius' comment, contained in the top margin, is a quote from Seneca, "superstitio error insanus est. Amandos timet quos colit violat quid eius interest ut neges infames." Cf. Sen. *Epist.* 123 par.16-17 (transcribed incorrectly in Petrarch).
[224] Lucr., 3, 980-982.

(*minae vatum*)[225] in the name of the state, such *religio* can even lead to iniquities such as the sacrifice of Iphigenia[226] or the slaughtering of the calf.[227] Both sacrifices are infinitely cruel, completely unnecessary and, therefore, avoidable. The first one will ultimately cause the destruction of Troy and the house of the Atrides through other murders. In describing the second one, Lucretius very movingly recounts that while the incense wreathed altars still steam with the blood of the sacrificial offering, the cow, showing very motherly, almost human feelings, desperately searches for her offspring in the fields and cowsheds. *Religio*, according to Lucretius, is a source of terror and slavery, an instrument of psychological blackmail and political oppression. It maintains the status quo, which in turn favours the rich and powerful, and keeps people slaves of a "cassa formido".[228] Seeing that Varro could speak about *religio* as a political issue,[229] Lucretius's Epicurean attack against the gods is also political. Farrington saw this as only "incidentally [...] a war on popular superstition; the real object of its attack is the state cult [whose] essential characteristic was the conscious retention of the principles of the popular belief, which were recognized as irrational, for reasons of outward convenience."[230] The reason why Lucretius was condemned to be erased from the official memory of Roman society must also have been political. Indeed, the *damnatio memoriae* was so complete that the only explicit contemporary mention of Lucretius is in Cicero who, though anti-Epicurean, publishes the *De rerum natura* and even praises it, though with some reserve, in a letter to his brother.[231] If *religio* represents every type of superstition, then Lucretius develops its

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[225] *ibid.*, 1, 109.
[226] *ibid.*, 1, 84-106 = *GLK* II 285,10-11 (Priscianus).
[227] Lucr., 2, 352-366.
[228] *ibid.*, 3, 981.
[229] Varro *De lingua latina* 5, 32; *De vita populi Romani* 1, 20, cit. in Pliny the Elder *Nat. Hist.*, 18.
[230] Farrington, 1946, p.179.
[231] *Ad Quint. fr.* II, 9, "Lucreti poemata, ut scribis, ita sunt: multis luminibus ingenii, multae tamen artis". For a discussion of the concessive *tamen* and *multa ars* in the possible pejorative interpretation

ideological opposite, *voluptas*, and exhorts his readers to reach the *summum cacumen* of this understanding.[232] As Ennius had already asserted, if the gods really did exist, from their blissful home in "the lands between here and the stars" (*intermundia*) they obviously did not really care at all about the human race, for if they did, the good would triumph and the bad would not, which is plainly not the case.[233] If anything, the gods represent perfect Epicurean ataraxy in their own *hortulus* by living apart in complete tranquillity.[234]

Thanks to Servius, we have already seen that Lucretius declares that the torments people think exist at the depths of Acheron do not exist at all in the afterlife. How could they when there is no afterlife except for a cosmos of limitless, anonymous scattered atoms? Such torments exist only inasmuch as we fear that they might. Lucretius, therefore, casts his anathema against the false terrors of man in a bid to dispel them and thus free humanity of such a weight. The birds pecking at Tityos's entrails could not possibly find enough to feed on for eternity even if his body were spread all over the world. Tityos is an allegory of those who have completely prostrated themselves for love and are lacerated by it as if by vultures. Such Tityi are picked at by anguish and torn to pieces by passion.[235] Sisyphus is also always before us. He symbolizes the politically ambitious who set their minds on obtaining the utmost political power and ineluctably return home beaten and depressed. Absolute power is also *inane*, not to mention fraught with hard work.[236] The Epicurean ideal was, therefore, to "live apart" - from this futile insanity. The Belides or Danaides who try in vain to fill perforated jugs with water represent our

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as "rhetorical artifice" justifying the *damnatio*, see Pizzani, 1996, pp.346-347, n.10.

[232] Lucr., 2, 1130.

[233] Ennius *Telamo frag.*, 170 (cit. in Cic., *de div.* 2, 104 and *de nat. deor.* 3, 79), "Ego deum genus esse semper dixi et dicam caelitum, sed eos non curare opinor, quid agat humanum genus; nam si curent, bene bonis sit, male malis, quod nunc abest".

[234] For the Epicurean *hortulus*, see Cic., *de nat. deor.*, 1, 43, "Mihi quidem etiam Democritus vir magnus in primis, cuius fontibus Epicurus hortulos suos inrigavit, nutare in natura deorum".

[235] Lucr., 3, 984-994 = *GLK* II 27,6 (Priscianus).

insatiability and ingratitude towards the seasons which come round and round again only to bring us varied, delectable fruits. Nature is so generous to us and yet we are never happy.[237] If anything, the physical punishment inflicted by fellow humans are worse than the allegorical torments traditionally envisaged in Hades. One only has to think of jail, the Tarpeian Rock, the lashes of the whip, the executioner, the rack, the boiling pitch, the incandescent laminae and the torches of resinous wood used to torture slaves. Even where these torments are physically absent, one's guilty conscience conjures them up, fearing that with death they will only get worse.[238] By continuing to allow one's life to be conditioned by such fictitious torments after death, the life of the stubbornly foolish indeed becomes a living hell: "Hic Acherusia fit stultorum denique vita".[239]

True to his anti-Dantean stance, Petrarch's succinct analysis of the underworld does not explicitly emulate Dante's *Inferno*, though there are, as we shall see, certain Dantesque elements. The fact, however, that Petrarch chooses Hades as the literary site of analysis is novel and unexpected, inasmuch as the *De otio* is addressed, after all, to Carthusian monks. To gauge just how novel this particular Petrarchan exegesis is with respect to contemporary thought, we may compare it with Boccaccio's appraisal of the same torments. The *Genealogie deorum gentilium* are, presumably, for a lay audience versed in classical literature. On the other hand, Petrarch's analysis of pagan religion is addressed to an audience of cloistered monks with a programmatic aversion to humanistic interests. The cross over is obviously part of Petrarch's *modus docendi*.

The differences between Petrarch and Boccaccio in such analysis manifest themselves also in their conclusions. For Boccaccio, Tityos represents the mind of

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[236] Lucr., 3, 995-1002.
[237] *ibid.*, 3, 1003-1010 = *GLK* V 297, 2 (Pompeius gramm.).
[238] *ibid.*, 3, 1012-1022 = *Floril. Sangall.* (only Lucr. 3, 1013).

the constant worker being devoured by the pressure to accumulate wealth.[240] Ixion represents those who aspire in vain to regal power.[241] Sisyphus represents those toiling away in an endless effort to carry on with life.[242] Tantalus represents avarice.[243] The main differences lie with Tityos: whereas in Boccaccio Tityos represents the accumulation of wealth, in Petrarch he represents the sins of the liver.

On this point, it is interesting to point out that in the *Genealogie*, Boccaccio explains the torments inflicted upon Flegias[244] and the alternative spelling for Iphegenia, that is, Yphianassa,[245] by explicitly quoting Lucretius. In Boccaccio, however, the quotes are not direct, but, rather, from Serv. *ad Aen.*, 6, 618 and Lucretius 1, 84 in Priscianus grammaticus 7, 3 respectively. Servius and Priscianus are two sources which Petrarch also uses, together with others, but he chooses not to even mention Lucretius in his analysis of classical Hades. Again, the differences between Boccaccio and Petrarch are probably dictated by audience and Petrarch's *modus docendi*.

In the *De otio* a Lucretian paradigm is useful in understanding the structure and purpose of the *De otio*. It also marks a radical evolution in Petrarch's approach. In 1341 Petrarch had structured his *Collatio laureationis* in a bid to comment on a line from Virgil's *Georgics* through other classical authors. By 1347-8 this

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[239] Lucr., 3, 1023.
[240] Boccaccio *Gen. deor. gent.*, 6, 10.
[241] *ibid.*, 1,14,3; 9, 25, 1; 9, 27.
[242] *ibid.*, 1, 14, 3; 13, 56, 4.
[243]. *ibid.*, 12, 1.
[244] *ibid.*, 9, 25, 3, "Nunc quid veteres de inpensa Flegie pena senserint videamus. Flegias autem dictus est a *flegon*, quod est flamma, et ideo Martis recte dicitur filius, quia calidus sit et siccus et cui ardores et incendia competant. Quod autem apud inferos damnatus sit, ea que dicta est pena, putat **Lucretius** quod arbitrati sint veteres antequam ad corpora veniant apud Superos esse animas, et venientes in corpora, quoniam inferi sumus respective ad supercelestia corpora, eas descendere ad inferos et ibidem varias habere penas secundum varias affectiones vel exercitia; et sic Flegias in hac vita inter mortales vivens ad hanc penam damnatus est".
[245] *ibid.*, 12, 16, 1, "Ephigenia Agamenonis fuit filia, ut in *Agamenonis* tragedia testatur idem Seneca. Hanc tamen alii Yphianassam vocant, ut **Lucretius** dicens: "Aulide quo pacto Triviai virginis aram Yphianassai turparent sanguine fede" etc".

technique had dramatically changed. It becomes one of "spicing". In the *De otio religioso* Petrarch openly writes;

> ut interdum oratione soluta inter seculares sacris stilum testimoniis *condire* soleo, sic inter ecclesiasticos et religiosos viros secularibus literis delector[246]

Indeed, what Petrarch does in the first book of the *De otio* is to comment on the *Psalms* by drawing parallels with classical authors whom he explicitly mentions. In the first part of the second book, this same technique is reversed and thus becomes even subtler. That is to say, Petrarch lists the classical torments of Hades without, however, naming his source. He then comments on them by explicitly referring to similar lines from the *Psalms*. Indeed, Petrarch actually states at this point that he does this "to mix our writings with those of the pagans".[247] In other words, Petrarch seems to have operated a *reductio ad unum* of the *literae humanae* and *divinae*. Furthermore, the symmetry in mixing between the two books of the *De otio* shows just how important this *reductio* was for Petrarch.

The authorisation for such *reductio* probably derived from Virgil who had wanted "to mix" (*permiscere*) human virtues with those of the gods when he writes in *Eclogue* IV about the future son of Pollio.[248] An entire mediaeval tradition interpreted this particular eclogue as a prediction of the birth of Christ and the return of the golden age of humanity's divine origins. This is why Virgil is hailed by Dante (and Dante's Statius) as being capable of foreseeing the Advent of Christ and, therefore, as being almost Christian himself.[249] It would follow, then, that Petrarch's desire "to mix" together writings from the Judaeo-Christian heritage with others from the classical tradition is in emulation of Virgil's exegetical, poetical and

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[246] *De otio*, p.730. The italics are mine.
[247] *ibid.*, p.702, "ut externis nostra permisceam".
[248] *Ecl.*, IV 15-7, "Ille deum vitam accipiet divisque videbit/ permixtos heroas".
[249] *Purg.*, XXII 64-73 *et passim*. Cf. Dante *Mon.*, I, 11; *Epist.*, VII, 6. For Virgil as a prophet of the

indeed ontogenetical stance. After all, as Virgil had already "predicted", the return of a golden Messianic age would only come about via such mixing. We shall see in the chapter on the *Familiares* that such 'mixing' is in line with Petrarch's concept of the pneumatic power of the Holy Ghost inspiring not only Christians, but also pre-Christian thinkers ever since Creation.

In this general stance, it follows that the aim of such "spicing" or mixing is not only literary but, rather, pragmatic and urgent. The main aim of Petrarch's *De otio* is to have Gherardo (and monasticism *tout court*? Christendom *tout court*?) embrace *vacatio et visio*, that is, to break free from false terrors and thus see more clearly and correctly. The first and foremost enemies to tackle in this *vacatio et visio* are "fallacia et pompae terrestres", which we must learn "to deceive by fleeing away from them".[250] For "nothing in them is solid or sound, but a treacherous tongue exalts them with vain words and presents them as something great, as if intent on circumventing forgetful souls or erasing memory."[251] This is the "Vanitas vanitatum" to which Petrarch adds; "Dixi in corde meo vadam et affluam delitiis et fruar bonis et vidi quod hec quoque esset vanitas".[252] This is reminiscent of Lucretius's appraisal of Tantalus who represented "cassa formido", or the "divom metus inanis". The parallel between every single human being and Tantalus will be strengthened by Petrarch's use of the *Psalms*, "Clamate omnes, clamate singuli, 'Salvum me fac, Deus, quoniam intraverunt aque usque ad animam meam'".[253] Petrarch interprets Tantalus immersed in infernal waters as representing those who

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future birth of Christ, see Lact., *Div. inst.*, 8, 24; Aug. *civ.* 10, 27; Jerome *Epist.*, 53.

[250] This and the following translations from Petrarch's Latin text are mine.

[251] *De otio*, p.694, "nichil in eis solidum aut stabile, sed has lingua dolosa verbis inanibus attollit magnumque aliquid esse contendit, quasi oblitas circumventura animas vel memoriam ablatura".

[252] *Eccl.*, I, 2 in *De otio*, p.694-696.

[253] *Ps.*, 68, 2 cit. in *De otio*, pp.700 & 722. The psalm might also have been the inspiration for Petrarch's own *Psalmus penitentialis* IV 23, "salvam fac animam meam".

are ruined by the vanity of earthly pleasures which are fleeting and flow like running water.[254]

After a series of other quotes from the *Ecclesiastes* and the *Psalms* on such *vanitas*, Petrarch chooses another two from the *Psalms*: "Homo cum in honore esset non intellexit, comparatus est iumentis insipientibus et similis factus est illis" and "Sicut oves in inferno positi sunt: mors depascet eos".[255] The allusion to Tityos stretched out over nine jugera with vultures picking at his liver may not at first be evident. When the Lucretian text is superimposed on the *Psalms*, a pattern may, however, be detected. I shall analyse this pattern more closely in the following paragraphs. On the subject of Tityos, let us remember that in Etrusco-Roman culture, the liver was considered the centre of both intelligence and communion with the cosmos. Under the Roman monarchy and Republic this belief formed the basis of the augural art of hepatoscopy. Under the Empire the same belief developed in two different directions. For Macrobius, in his comment on Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis*, the "iecur immortale" represents "tormenta conscientiae". Servius, on the other hand, as we have already seen in his comment to Virgil's *Aeneid*, considered the liver as the centre of *amor* in the sense of *libido* - earthly-physical love. This difference in exegesis of Late Antiquity will continue in the fourteenth century. There will also be some interplay, however. If in his *Genealogia*,[256] Boccaccio's own interpretation is thoroughly in line with Macrobius (but let us remember that Boccaccio also knows about Lucretius's analysis through Servius and Priscianus grammaticus), Petrarch, instead, has united the interpretations of the two

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[254] *De otio*, p.700, "cum aquarum nomine voluptates et carnalia hec aquarum more labentia solere accipi certum sit; nam quid, oro, fluenti aque similius quam res hominum sine fine volubiles?".
[255] *Ps.*, 48, 13, 15 cit. in *De otio*, p.698.
[256] Boccaccio, *Geneal. deor. gent.*, V xxiv *De Tytio filio Jovis tertio* (*Tytio* is Boccaccio's misspelling of *Tityo*).

commentatores, namely, Macrobius and Servius, but in the light of Lucretian thought and the Old Testament.

In his mixing of biblical quotations with classical ones, Petrarch literally invites us to decipher the allusion in *Psalm* 11,9. According to the pattern I am delineating, the "impii [qui] in circuitu ambulant"[257] very well conjure up the image of Sisyphus pushing his huge stone up and down the hill, or the Belides vainly going backwards and forwards to fetch water with their perforated jugs.[258] Similarly, *Psalm* 82,14-5 "Deus meus pone illos ut rotam et sicut stipulam ante faciem venti"[259] would seem to allude to Ixion doomed to spend eternity on a turning wheel.[260]

The plight of Ixion, however, begs the question of Petrarch's sources, for there is an obvious discrepancy between Virgil and Petrarch, which might in turn suggest Lucretius. Let us briefly consider this discrepancy.

The main source of inspiration for *Aen.* VI is, of course, Homer. However, there is a problem with the seeming confusion in Virgil between Ixion and Tantalus. In Homer's νεκυια,[261] Tantalus is punished in a marshy pond with the water lapping at his chin. Every time his terrible thirst drove him to bend down to drink, a daemon (δαιμων) drained the pool leaving only the black earth at his feet. Every time old Tantalus tried to reach the many fruits hanging just above his head, a wind would blow them up into the clouds. It was Pindar[262] who first described Tantalus under an overhanging rock. Though having respected the traditional Homeric version in his *Georgics* (III 38 and IV 484), Virgil seems, however, to have inserted in his *Aeneid*

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[257] *De otio*, p.702.
[258] Cf. the torments inflicted upon the "avari" and "prodighi" of *If.* VII 25-48, "Qui vidi gente piu' ch'altrove troppa,/ e d'una parte e d'altra, con grand'urli,/ voltando pesi per forza di poppa./...".
[259] *De otio*, p.702.
[260] Cf. the torment inflicted upon the three Florentine sodomites of *If.* XVI 20-27, "e quando a noi fuor giunti,/ fenno una rota di se' tutti e trei [...] cosi' rotando, ciascuno il visaggio/ drizzava a me, si' che 'n contrario il collo/ faceva ai pie' continuo viaggio".

the Euripidean and Polygnotean[263] version which had already contaminated the two originally distinct Homeric and Pindaric torments. Virgil in turn ascribes them not to Tantalus but to Ixion. Virgil does not mention Tantalus at all and describes Ixion's traditional torment on the wheel suffered elsewhere (VI 616-7) by anonymous "others". This seeming confusion has induced some scholars to think that later scribes may have interpolated the original Virgilian text. The same scholars offer solutions such as modifying the order of the torments or explicitly including the name Tantalus and Ixion in the appropriate places.[264] Let us consider the mere order in which the Hadean torments are presented in some classical authors, together with Petrarch and Boccaccio.

Homer	*Od.* XI	Tityon	Tantalos	Sisyphos	Heracles		
Ovid	*Met.*IV	Tityos	Tantalus	Sisyphus	Ixion	Belides	
	X	Tantalus	Ixion	Tityos	Belides	Sisyphus	
Lucr.	3	Tantalus	Tityos	Sisyphus	Belides		
Virg.	*Aen.*VI	Tityon	Lapithes	fratricides (cf Tant.)	souls (cf Sisyph.)	souls/wheels	*alii*
Petrarch	*De otio.*	Tantalus	Lapithes	Sisyphus	Titios	Ixion	
Bocc.	*G.d.g.*I	Tytius	Yxion	Sysiphus	Tantalus	Theseus	Thesiphon

First of all, the order in which Petrarch first presents these mythical tortured souls seems to be more reminiscent of Lucretius and Ovid than of Virgil. Indeed, it would appear that in this non-Virgilian tradition Petrarch has tried to emend the flaws in the sixth book of Virgil's *Aeneid.* That is, Petrarch calls Tantalus and Ixion by their pre-Virgilian names and returns them to their original torments. In the development of his discussion in *De otio* II, however, Petrarch then modifies the order of these torments. No longer is the list as it is in the table above. The new order established

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[261] *Od.*, 11, 582-92.
[262] *Ol.*, 1, 55 ff.
[263] Euripides *Or.* 5 and fol.; Pausanias (X 31) describes Polygnotos' fresco in Delphi stating that this particular version was introduced by Archilochos. According to Paratore (Paratore 1988, p.304), Virgil may have seen this fresco in Delphi.
[264] *ibid.*, pp.303-304.

is: Tantalus, Titios, Sisyphus/Belides and Ixion. Even though Lucretius does not mention Ixion, the order in which Petrarch re-presents the infernal torments is *exactly* the same as it is in *De rerum natura* III. The same ordering of the torments in Petrarch and Lucretius may be a coincidence, or due to Petrarch's reading of Ovid who also based his analysis on Lucretius. However, given the nature of Petrarch's analysis, which seems to be a first in the later Middle Ages, this order might be considered as an allusion in itself to the Lucretian text. Petrarch would thus seem to have been following the Lucretian order whilst looking through the *Psalms* for parallel texts to quote.

The parallel between Petrarch's text and that of Lucretius is not only a question of the order of the Hadean torments. Petrarch mirrors the classical text in his approach to analysis, character description, rhetorical devices and elaboration of the Lucretian text and language. Let us now briefly explore this mirroring.

Immediately after his iconoclastic analysis of Hades, Lucretius embarks on a long *cogitatio mortis*. He reminds his readers that even good king Ancus had died, "who was far better than you in many respects."[265] Many other kings and rulers, who had led great nations, had also died. Xerxes, the Persian king who had terrified the Greeks and had walked on water gave up his spirit.[266] Scipio, though described as "belli fulmen" and "Carthaginis horror", "had given up his bones to the earth".[267] So too had philosophers, artists and poets. One of these was Homer. Although he

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[265] Lucr., 3, 1024-1026, "Hoc etiam tibi tute interdum dicere possis:/ Lumina sis oculis etiam bonus Ancu' reliquit/ qui melior multis quam tu fuit, improbe, rebus".

[266] *ibid.*, 3, 1027-1033, "Inde alii multi reges rerumque potentes/ occiderunt, magnis qui gentibus imperitarunt./ Ille quoque ipse, viam qui quondam per mare magnum/ stravit, iterque dedit legionibus ire per altum,/ ac pedibus salsas docuit super ire lacunas/ et contemsit quis insultans murmura ponti,/ lumine adempto animam moribundo corpore fudit."

[267] *ibid.*, 3, 1034-1035, "Scipiadas, belli fulmen, Carthaginis horror,/ ossa dedit terrae" = *GLK* VI 56, 9 (Pompeius gramm.). The syntagma "belli fulmen" probably derives from Ennius, but was used by Lucretius, as quoted, and by Cicero *pro L. Balbo* 34. Virgil (*Aen.*, 6, 842-843, "Quis Gracchi genus, aut geminos, duo **fulmina belli**,/ Scipiadas") also derives it from Ennius and perhaps also from Lucretius. Silius Italicus derives it from Virgil (eg. Sil. 7,106-107; 8, 222 *et passim*). The syntagma, *belli fulmen*, is also present in Petrarch's *De rem.*, 2, 131, 6 and *De vita sol.*, 2, 13, 5.

had held "the sceptre of poetic prowess", he now lies in exactly the same slumber as the others.[268] Age had also caught up with Democritus to remind him that he, the most famous Greek orator of all time, was losing his memory. This was such a defeat for him that he committed suicide![269] Even Epicurus, Lucretius's master, had died. The fact that Epicurus had surpassed the entire human race in genius "like a sun rising to extinguish the light of the stars" had not earned him immortality.[270] Lucretius asks his future reader, "Why should you indignantly doubt that you too will die?"[271] Similarly, Petrarch follows on from his own "Lucretian style" analysis of hell with an analogous yet longer catalogue of leaders. Petrarch's catalogue, however, will include Roman emperors, popes and kings. Pope Boniface VIII (1294-1303) is labelled "orbis stupor", Alfonso XI of Spain (1311-1350) is "Saracenorum modo terror et fidei clipeus" and Robert of Sicily (1308-1343) is "Galliarum decus et Italie ornamentum". Though also present in Cicero,[272] these epithets recall Lucretius's description of Scipio as "belli fulmen, Carthaginis horror".[273] Furthermore, while Lucretius's Scipio, the greatest general of Republican Rome, was buried "proinde ac famul infimus esset", Petrarch's Alfonso XI, one of the great rulers of his time, died of plague "occiduis obiectus insultibus".[274] In other words, although Alfonso had been truly decisive in the Christian *Reconquista* of Spain, his death was exactly the same as that of thousands of common people all throughout Europe.

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[268] Lucr., 3, 1036-1038, "Adde repertores doctrinarum atque leporum,/ adde Heliconiadum comites; quorum unus Homerus,/ sceptra potitus eadem aliis sopitu' quietest".
[269] *ibid.*, 3, 1039-1041, "Denique Democritum postquam matura vetustas/ admonuit memores motus languescere mentis,/ sponte sua leto caput obvius optulit ipse".
[270] Lucr., 3, 1042, "Ipse Epicurus obit decurso lumine vitae,/ qui genus humanum ingenio superavit, et omnis/ restinxit, stellas exortus ut aetherius sol".
[271] *ibid.*, 3, 1045.
[272] See n. 267.
[273] *De otio*, pp.708-10. However, I feel that the constant order of genitive - nominative in Petrarch is allusive in itself to a certain classical linguistic tradition or model from which *stupor mundi*, the epithet used for Frederick II and whose ordering is more romance, is essentially extraneous. Cf. Durante, 1980, *passim*.

Lucretius tells his reader, "Your life is already a death. You spend most of it sleeping even when you are awake. You never stop seeing ghosts and your mind is driven by superstition. Nor will you ever manage to find the cause of such ill for you are constantly plagued by innumerable thoughts and wander drunkenly, tossed about in the uncertain error of your soul. This is all like a weight on the souls of men. Human beings, however, choose not to delve into the nature of such a burden and would rather change their surroundings than change themselves, as if in this way they could somehow throw off this weight".[275] Lucretius then paints an ironic picture of the wealthy Roman who suddenly grows tired of staying in his luxurious suburban home. He rushes to his country villa driving his colts especially imported from Gaul as if he had to bring help to the building on fire. And yet he starts yawning even before he gets there. He either falls into a deep sleep in order to seek oblivion or frantically rushes back to the Urbs.[276] Petrarch introduces the same gentleman into his own text.[277] Petrarch places him in front of his tomb and asks him directly where his female slaves, cupbearers and fine cooks are now. As already part of Petrarch's own *cogitatio mortis*, the Petrarchan *amplificatio* of the Lucretian text contains the rhetorical questions: Where is the wealthy patrician's ostentatiously furnished and lavishly decorated suburban house now? Where are his elegant horses which grind away their golden bits?[278]

Lucretius then ends the third book by remarking that we are all like so many Tantali going around in a circle, blind to the "tanta cupido" which is our "morbum".[279] Petrarch, on the strength of the already-quoted, "impii [qui] in circuitu ambulant", develops the rest of his second book of *De otio* as a remedy for such

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[274] He died in 1350 while laying siege around Gibraltar, which was held by the Saracens.
[275] Lucr. 3, 1046-1059.
[276] *ibid.*, 3, 1060-1067.
[277] *De otio*, p.710.
[278] *ibid.*

illness, a *cogitatio mortis* which will at least make our remaining life somewhat less of a living death. What Petrarch has effectively achieved is an elaboration of a section of the Lucretian text which corresponded to his own selective syncretism. Furthermore, Petrarch has also directly addressed a Lucretian character in order to propound a more modern meditation on death. In so doing the meditation itself becomes intimately Christian and, therefore, more easily accessible for his specific audience. The meditation thus becomes another instance of Petrarchan *callidae iuncturae*.

In his long *cogitatio mortis*, Petrarch designates Tantalus as his only enemy with a name. Indeed, Petrarch, like Lucretius before him, considers Tantalus as emblematic of every infernal torment[280] and the most dangerous of psychological states, encompassing the others. Tantalus represents, therefore, all of Petrarch's "hostes domestici". These enemies appear again in his *Psalmi penitentiales*[281] and are determined to destroy him. The battle is, after all, with the enemy within, that is, our *hostis domesticus*, where "pertinacior hostis, eo clarior victoria".[282] When Petrarch describes himself under the "inpendens magnum [...] aere saxum" of Vaucluse[283] he becomes Tantalus and, therefore, his own worst enemy. Petrarch's *hostis domesticus* is himself.

For Petrarch, Augustinian conversion was also achieved by confronting the inner workings of this enemy. This meant tackling the "portentum somniorum et turbulentissime visiones".[284] Again, the atmosphere of Petrarch's analysis would appear to be Lucretian. Petrarch points out, however, that the "magna ingenia" who

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[279] Lucr., 3, 1076-1081.
[280] *De otio*, pp. 700 & 722.
[281] *Psalmus* 5, 6, "Intus et extra michi ipse sum molestus; utrobique hostes domesticos inveni, qui me pessundederunt;" For these internal and external enemies, see also *Fam.*, XIX 16, 11.
[282] *De otio*, p. 738.
[283] *ibid.*, p. 714, cf. Lucr., 3, 980.
[284] *De otio*, p.746.

had discussed the problem had not got to the bottom of it.[285] Petrarch's contribution would thus be an absolute first in the Later Middle Ages. The idea behind such a claim is extremely common to all 'firsts' in poetry. As such, it is also present in the incipit of Petrarch's own *Collatio laureationis*. It is also present in the incipit of *De rerum natura* IV, "Avia Pieridum peragro loca nullius ante/ trita solo…"[286] which, as we shall soon see, Petrarch seems to have directly taken from some source containing more Lucretius than is often thought.

Lucretius's self-praise is a trope which is common to many poets in antiquity. Benvenuto of Imola, whom Petrarch knew, lists such ancient poets, including Lucretius, in relationship to Dante's analogous claim to be the first to treat certain topics in verse.[287] Even though Dante does not seem to know Lucretius, Dante's son, Pietro Alighieri, explicitly quotes the Latin poet as an authority concerning the vultures pecking at Tityos's liver.[288] Whereas Benvenuto's sources are most probably Jerome and Macrobius, Pietro's source is almost certainly Servius. The interesting point to make here, however, is that both Benvenuto and Pietro Alighieri include Lucretius as if they somehow had first-hand knowledge of him. In Petrarch's own generation, making out that one knew Lucretius was catching on.

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[285] *ibid.*, "et si multa magnis ingeniis disputata sint, nondum tamen exacte satis ad ima perventum reor."

[286] Lucr., 4, 1-2, already used in Lucr., 1, 926-7 = *GLK* VI 612, 1 *fragm. de metris*.

[287] Benvenuto of Imola, *Comentum Inferni super Dantis Aldigherij Comeodiam*, ad Cantum quartum si' ch'io fui sesto fra cotanto senno: "[…] Et si dicis quomodo autor se laudavit, dico quod hoc est licitum sepe honesta de causa […]Lucanus: Quantum Smirnaei etc. **Quid Lucretius poeta?** Discurre per totum librum Boetii, et videbis […]"; see also *ad If.* 70-72, "Dicendum breviter quod autor bene dicit et vere; nam si loquamur historice, Virgilius natus est tarde quantum ad aliquos poetas multos, quia licet dicatur, et sit princeps poetarum latinorum, non tamen primus, imo multi praecesserunt eum, sicut Livius, Ennius, Plautus, Terentius, Lucilius, et **Lucretius**, qui mortuus est die qua natus Virgilius, nam se occidit"; see also *ad Purg.* XXII 94-114, "bene dicit, quia paucos latinos Virgilius nominavit IV capitulo Inferni et hic: unde poterat hic nominare dignius Ennium, **Lucretium**, Furium, Pacuvium, Actium, Naevium, Catullum, a quibus Virgilius multa accepit, ut clare demonstrat Macrobius".

[288] *Comentarium* (first redaction), *If.* XXIV 79-151, "Ad hoc etiam **Lucretius**, figurando iecur Tityi vulturibus in Inferno esse datum laniandum et laniatum semper renasci, ex eo quod Latonam de stupro interpellavit. Et hoc, quod libidine semel paracta, etiam taliter iterum resurgit".

Petrarch seems to have systematically selected Lucretian expressions which had some significant bearing on the philosophical development of his own work. A salient example is Lucretius's digression on the nature of "dream images" (*simulacra*). Lucretius begins his analysis with "docui cunctarum exordia **rerum** qualia sint et quam **variis** distantia **formis**".[289] Petrarch begins his own analysis with "tam multe sunt species, tam **varie rerum forme**".[290] In *De rerum natura* the "rerum simulacra [...] volitant [...] atque eadem **nobis vigilantibus** obvia mentes terrificant). These images are presented by Lucretius as if they were lost souls fleeing from Acheron or shadows flying about amongst the living.[291] In *De otio* Petrarch's *fantasmata* enter like death "per fenestras [...] in **nobis** [...] **evigilantibus**" as if they were "subterranei insultus". For Petrarch, these *fantasmata* are nothing but "**inferni metus**" where the greatest victory lies in "carnem spiritui **subiecisse** et vicisse seipsam". This is obviously reminiscent of Virgil's (and Petrarch's) exaltation of Lucretius in the *Georgics* quoted above[292] II 490-2, "Felix, qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas/ Atque **metus** omnis et inexorabile fatum/ **subiecit** pedibus strepitumque Acherontis avari."[293] This, in turn, echoes Lucretius in his exaltation of Epicurus, "Quare religio pedibus **subiecta** vicissim/ opteritur, nos exaequat victoria caelo".[294] Petrarch's imitation of Lucretius would thus seem to be both direct and indirect.

Imitation of Lucretius may also be present in Petrarch's discussion of the "tanta ingenia" who lacked the Divine light to guide them.

Lucr., 3, 1-4:

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[289] Lucr., 4, 26-7.
[290] *De otio*, p.746. Though in quite a different context, cf. Ovid *met.*, 1, 1-9, "**mutatas** dicere **formas** [...] discordia semina **rerum**".
[291] Lucr., 4, 36-42; cf. *ibid.*, 1, 132.
[292] Cf. p. 59.
[293] *Georg.*, II 490-492.
[294] Lucr., 1, 78-9.

> E **tenebris tantis** tam clarum extollere **lumen** / Qui primus potuisti inlustrans commoda vitae, / Te sequor, o Graiae gentis decus, inque tuis nunc / Ficta pedum pono pressis **vestigia signis**.

Petrarch, *De otio*, p.798:

> Habemus quo vite cursum dirigamus, quod unum **tantis illis** defuit ingeniis. 'Habitantibus in regione umbre mortis lux orta est'[295] [...] ostensumque nobis iter in **tenebris**; [...] 'ambulemus ergo dum lucem habemus, ne nos **tenebre** comprehendant'[296] [...] venturi ad Illum 'qui habitat lucem inaccessibilem, in cuius lumine videbimus **lumen.**'[297]

When the Petrarchan text is seen in parallel with the *Familiaris* X 5 written in the same period (around 1350), we also notice the line, "hac tertia nullus aut tam pauci, ut prope iam nullo recenti **vestigio signata** sit".[298] Petrarch's imitation of Lucretius would thus seem to begin in the early thirteen-fifties with the key terms: *tenebrae tantae*, *lumen*, *vestigia* and *signum*.[299]

The context of the *Familiaris* X 5 refers to a level of *ars* which is a "meditatio pulcerrima". This *meditatio* always avails itself of "auxilium e celo" as it "inquirat **naturas rerum** omnium". Those who inquire into the nature of things go along their pathway avoiding the open roads and willingly keeping to the shadows.[300] They do not want to be profaned or despised as a result of too much familiarity. They wish, instead, to be seen by a chosen few and sought out with

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[295] *Is.*, IX,2.
[296] *Io.*, 12, 35.
[297] *Tim.*, I, 6, 16 & *Ps.*, 36, 9.
[298] *Fam.*, X 5, 8.
[299] Though rather tenuous, perhaps Bufano (Bufano, 1987, p.124) has detected the following example of Lucretian vocabulary also in another work of the same period, Petrarch's *Secretum*:- Lucr., 5, 222-227: "Tum porro puer, ut saevis proiectus ab undis/ navita, **nudus** humi iacet, infans, indigus omni/ vitali auxilio, cum primum in luminis oras/ nixibus ex alvo matris natura profudit,/ **vagitu**que locum lugubri complet, ut aecumst/ cui tantum in vita restet transire malorum"; *Secr.*, p.124: "Aspice **nudum** et informem inter **vagitus** et lacrimas nascentem".
[300] *Fam.*, X 5, 12, "Inque his omnibus vie tertie tramitibus sunt qui palam, sunt qui clam pergant et velut apertum evitantes umbris gaudeant, neque se profanari et nimia familiaritate contemni, sed videri a paucis et studio queri velint. Hi sunt poete, nostra presertim etate rarum genus...". For the question of greater fame deriving from a supposedly greater desire not to be known by sticking to the shadows, cf. Boccaccio, *De casibus*, 8, 1, 21, "quam ob rem probis latebras exquirendas dicerem".

dedication, contemplation and meditation, in a word, *studium*. These are the true poets of the world who, especially in Petrarch's time, constitute a "rarum genus". There are also those who, because of their "humbler and weaker style", are often accused of more severe infamy.[301] Here again, Petrarch seems to be alluding to Lucretius. Indeed, the entire passage would seem to be an explicit explanation for the *damnatio memoriae* of Lucretius and could be read as an apologia and tentative rehabilitation of the Latin poet.

Canfora believes he has found a Lucretian locus in the *Secretum* in the topos of the wise man who looks on to the shipwreck of others.[302] Seeing, however, that there is no lexical or progammatic overlap whatsoever, I would agree with Dotti who believes, rather, that both Lucretius and Petrarch were independently using the same classical topos.[303] Canfora had not even realised that the same trope is present in both the *RVF*[304] and the *Familiares*, which will be analysed below.

More extensive parallels between Petrarch and Lucretius have been detected by Gasparotto who strives to establish that the entire context and structure of *Eclogue* IX of Petrarch's *Bucolicum Carmen* is drawn directly from Lucretius, rather than through the filter of Macrobius. As in Lucretius, Petrarch insists on the futility of prayer and votive offerings to the gods; he praises the teachings of Epicurus; he invites his readers to flee from the snares of love; he stresses work and poverty as the facts of human life, and insists that death is always on our heels (*mors insequitur*). This in turn engenders a constant "metus mortis". Gasparotto

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[301] *Fam.*, X 5, 8-12. This was probably written on 11 June 1352, around the same time, that is, as Petrarch's reflections on the Lucretian text.
[302] *Secr.* II (ed. Bufano, 1987, p 162), cf. Lucr., 2, 1-4, cit. in Canfora, 1994-1995, pp.319-330.
[303] Dotti, 1981, pp. 158 & 262.
[304] *RVF* 235, 5-6 "né mai saggio nocchier guardò da scoglio/ nave".

also claims to have found well-camouflaged elements from all six books of *De rerum natura*.[305]

Gasparotto justifies the impossibility of actually proving his thesis by adducing the classical technique of "zelos" (ζηλος).[306] Such a technique, known in classical Latin as *aemulatio*, and termed by Petrarch as *imitatio*, relies on the personal culture of one's readers to recognize well-camouflaged intertexts. It is, after all, not impossible for Petrarch to have picked up the idea of this notion directly from the classics, or from the earlier Italian poet, Lovato Lovati.[307]

An added problem is the fact that some intertexts were so well concealed that even Petrarch himself did not recognise them any more. In the *Epistola familiaris* XXII 2 sent to Boccaccio "de imitandi lege", Petrarch explicitly admits to Boccaccio, who was editing Petrarch's *Carmen Bucolicum* at the time, that he was so steeped in classical literature that he would find himself writing phrases he assumed were original only to realise that they were not. He had instead taken them from one or other classical author and could no longer even remember which (*sed interdum obliviscar auctorem*).[308] Such was the case in the Ovidian line "Quid enim non carmina possunt?"[309] Petrarch writes down this line thinking at first that he had invented it. He had, instead, forgotten that he had actually read it in Ovid. He decides, therefore, to substitute it with "quid enim vim carminis equet?". He reaches the goal of his imitative method, that is, "similitudo, non identitas".[310]

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[305] Gasparotto, 1967-68, pp.312.
[306] *ibid.*
[307] In *Rer. mem.* I 41, Petrarch defines Lovati as "nuper poetarum omnium [...] facillime princeps, nisi iuris civilis studium amplexus et novem Musis duodecim tabulas immiscuisset et animum ab eliconiis curis ad forensem strepitum deflexisset".
[308] *Fam.*, XXII 2, 13.
[309] *Fam.*, XXII 2. 24-6. Ovid's line is *met.*, 7, 167. Cf. *Ecl.*, X 128.
[310] *Fam.*, XXII 2, 20. Petrarch also transfers Ovid *met.*, 7, 20-21, "Video meliora proboque,/ deteriora sequor", into his Italian "et veggio 'l meglio, et al peggior m'appiglio" of *RVF* 264, 136. Santagata (Santagata, 1996, p.1056) states that the same concept is repeated in very similar terms throughout several different works, namely, *Fam.*, XVIII 16, 28, "si cum meliora provideris, deteriora secteris?", *Secr.*, (I 28, 68) and *Ps. pen.*, 7, 10.

Petrarch did not, however, always hide his sources. In the *Familiares*, he explicitly mentions Lucretius at least three times, namely in two letters to Boccaccio on the theory of *imitatio* and in an *epystola metrica* to Virgil, which is effectively *imitatio* in practice.[311] In the above-mentionied *Familiaris* XXII 2, Petrarch reveals the sources which in more formal works, such as the *De otio*, he keeps well camouflaged. He lists the authors he claims to have hidden away elsewhere. These are Juvenal, Horace, Virgil, Ovid and Lucretius. In doing this, Petrarch specifically quotes Lucretius 1, 926-7 (repeated in 4, 1-2), "Avia Pyeridum peragro loca nullius ante/ Trita solo". These lines do not appear in any other mediaeval context before Petrarch, except in the so-called *fragmentum de metris*.[312] This *fragmentum*, however, does *not* contain the "Trita solo..." which Petrarch, instead, includes. Petrarch must have had access to some Lucretian source no longer extant today. From this we may formulate the following two hypotheses:

1. that Petrarch had read what immediately preceded them, that is, Lucretius's Epicurean analysis of the torments of Hades contained at the end of book three;
2. that Petrarch had read the immediate continuation of book four, that is, the passage on Lucretian *simulacra.*

The first hypothesis would thus support the possibility that Petrarch had actually been able to note the order in which Lucretius listed the torments; that he had seen the Lucretian expressions such as "belli fulmen", "Carthaginis horror", etc.; and that he had understood the literary and ideological significance of Lucretius's wealthy Roman patrician as a symbol of a particular life choice characterized by anguished avoidance. The second hypothesis would strongly support the dependence of Petrarch's *fantasmata* on Lucretius's *simulacra.*

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[311] *Fam.*, XXII 2, 19; XXIII 19, 17; XXIV 11, 16.

It is my hypothesis that Petrarch develops the rest of book two of the *De otio* as a Lucretian-style *cogitatio mortis* together with a discussion of euhemerism and a resemantization of *religio* and *felicitas* (preceded by his own independent resemantization of *otium*). Before discussing these points, let us summarise the above-mentioned evidence for a possible presence of a Lucretian influence in the *De otio*:

1. the typology of analysis of certain major fallacies;
2. the catalogue and order of the infernal torments (characters and rivers);
3. the designation of Tantalus as the main enemy
4. the description of important people of Petrarch's age
5. via the use of Lucretian structural patterns, eg. Lucr. *Carthaginis horror* – Petr. *Galliarum decus*;
6. Petrarch's apostrophe of Lucretius's anxious patrician;
7. the *topos* of primacy in confronting one's *fantasmata* (mirrored in the *tertia via nullo recenti vestigio signata*)
8. certain lexis (esp. *trita solo*) and syntagmata (eg. *nobis vigilantibus*)

The evidence presented in this discussion would suggest that Petrarch somehow had access to at least the end of book three and the beginning of book four of *De rerum natura*. The source on which Petrarch seems to have based his *imitatio*, whether *scheda*, *excerptum* or full manuscript, is, however, impossible to ascertain.

It must be said that the elements adduced as evidence, if taken individually at face value, may, perhaps, be only loosely definable as Lucretian, that is, as only sporadic or chance instances of *similitudo*. This was the weakness of Canfora's argument for the *Secretum* and of Gasparotto's argument for the *Bucolicum Carmen* IX, inasmuch as they did not find any lexical, semantic or philosophical system in

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[312] Cfr. *GLK* VI 612,1 *fragm. de metris.*

Petrarch's supposed imitation. I, on the other hand, have endeavoured to illustrate the system behind the imitation. If Petrarch does use Lucretius in the *De otio*, from the point of view of his teaching method, the imitation of Lucretius is meant to induce the Carthusians to challenge their own convictions regarding *religio*, *felicitas* and learning. It is also meant to demonstrate to posterity how it is possible to learn more about God, even through the most 'atheistic' of the pagan writers.

Euhemerus seu de vera religione seu de vera gloria:

Seeing that Montrieux did not possess any work whatsoever by Cicero and Lactantius, Petrarch presents a synthesis of ancient wisdom concerning euhemerism. Specifically through Lactantius, Petrarch teaches his Carthusian audience that the uproar of greedy Acheron in the form of *fantasmata* also refers to all those false beliefs in deified ancestors or kings such as Romulus, Julius Proculus, Hercules and Esculapius. It concerns those *religiones* which little by little started to develop in ancient Greece and Rome and which eventually were even exported to the provinces. *Superstitio* is so surreptitiously and multifariously present in life that Petrarch dedicates a large part of the second book of *De otio* to the unveiling of it.[313] According to Isidore of Seville,[314] Lucretius had declared that superstition is "superstantium rerum, id est caelestium et divinorum quae super nos stant". Isidore, in a gross understatement, remarks that Lucretius had spoken 'badly' about superstition. Petrarch too speaks 'badly' when he paraphrases Cicero so as to declare that Romulus the fratricide was deified through the love of his people, fame or, in other words, a lie. Julius Proculus was not placed on high by the gods but rather brutally murdered by the Roman senate and thrown into Caprea lake so that

[313] *De otio*, pp.750-772 *et passim.*
[314] *orig.*, 8, 3, 7.

no trace might be left of him.[315] Petrarch generously reminds his Carthusian audience that St Augustine had written that the superstition based on the divinity of Romulus had only been enforced by Rome so that the subjugated peoples should be deferential towards this imperialistic power.[316] Here our minds are spontaneously cast back to Servius's Lucretian gloss, "nam religiosi sunt qui per reverentiam timent". Petrarch then points out that only according to the *opinio vulgi* does Aeneas now supposedly sit with the gods.[317] In short, all gods were originally men. *Religio* is an obviously irrational political instrument used for reasons of practical convenience. This was the error of the gentiles who were subject to and spellbound by religious poetry, images and idols.[318]

In his *De otio*, Petrarch writes that the errors in evaluation of such scandalous fallacies (*fantasmata*) enter men through the two senses most used in the perception of truth and falsehood, sight and hearing, that is, the windows of the soul. Petrarch hastens to say that Cicero the euhemerist was, perhaps, officially an augur and had numbered his daughter amongst the gods, but that this should not deceive anyone. The fact that it did, according to Petrarch, demonstrates that the devil can lead even the most intelligent of men into error through grandiloquence of style.[319]

Though defined by Cochin as an indulgent humanistic digression, and by Pacca as a "sfoggio di erudizione fine a se stessa",[320] Petrarch's discussion of classical euhemerism is cleverly articulated as an invitation to the monks of Montrieux to reflect on the intrinsic sense of their own *religio* now. Is their

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[315] *De otio*, p.752.
[316] *ibid.*, p.754.
[317] *ibid.*, p.756.
[318] It is probably under Petrarch's influence that Boccaccio also cultivates a sound euhemeristic stance regarding *falsa divinitas*. In both *De mul. clar. 7* and his *Vita di Dante*, Boccaccio claims that the ancient gods were once only men and, therefore, subject to death.
[319] *De otio*, p.764, "verborum splendor"; My reading of the text is, therefore, in opposition to Cochin (p.189) who writes, "Il semble que Pétrarque ait pris à la lettre una pure formule de rhétorique".

particular *modus vivendi* really anagogical? Or is it, rather, more in line with its etymological meaning of the constriction or ties which the *vates* of God use to keep us chained to His divine cult and thus control us better?[321] Petrarch invites them to reflect on the possibility that perhaps not all the trappings of organized religiosity are indeed necessary for the journey of the soul.

De amore seu de duplicibus voluptatibus

The hendiadys, *amor et gloria,* characterizes many of Petrarch's Latin works, especially the *Secretum*. The first element, *amor*, is also another *fantasma* which he confronts in the *De otio* in the form of *voluptas*. He writes, "siqua per voluptatem nequiter feceritis, voluptas cito abibit, nequiter factum illud apud vos semper manebit".[322] Obviously this type of *voluptas* has the same nature of the *babilonicum flumen* which comes and then quickly flows away – *fluit et fugit*, or, as St Augustine had written, the "flumina Babylonis [quae] sunt omnia quae hic amantur et transeunt".[323] It is *amor* as described, for example, by Andreas Capellanus in *De amore* (Andrea Capellanus, ed. Battaglia, 1947, 1,3,5): "Amor est passio quaedam innata procedens ex visione et immoderata cogitatione formae alterius sexus, [...] nulla est angustia maior". *Amor*, for Andrea, derives from the verb *amo*, which he sees as a form of hook (*hamo*). He, therefore, produces the fishing metaphor by which *amor* is a question of "capere vel capi". But this reductive vision of *amor* is only the physiological state given that, according to Capellanus, such love is impossible both before puberty and in old age (after sixty for men and after fifty for women).[324] Petrarch will term such external, all encompassing, carnal love as a

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[320] Pacca, 1998, p.100.
[321] Isid., *orig.*, 8, 2, 2.
[322] *De otio*, p.724; quote from Gell. 16, 1, 4.
[323] Aug., *in psalm.*, 136, 3, 1.
[324] The formula "amor est passio" was paraphrased by Jean de Meung in the second part of the *Roman*

"delicatissima res" which needs sleep, quiet and food. Such love also delights in soft clothing, exquisite cosmetics, private whispers, joy, games and song.[325] It is to these pleasures that Petrarch refers in the above-mentioned *Familiaris* X 5[326] in which his first classification of humanity is described as "voluptatibus dedita".[327] Similarly, in the *De otio*, Petrarch writes that the gregarious youngest sister of the seven deadly sins, Lust, was sought out by all men and became a public prostitute. She also became known as *libido*. She is by far the greatest of the "portenta somniorum et turbulentissime visiones".[328] There is a love, therefore, which leads to base pleasure.

However, it is on this very point that Petrarch's catabasis to Hades operates it greatest gnoseological shift. If one cannot manage to ward off *voluptas tout court*, the ineluctable consequence is that "**in antiqua** longeque olim a tergo proiecta **dedecora relabendum** sit".[329] Given this incapacity to resist the attraction of *amor*, it is not surprising, therefore, that this part of his treatise *De otio* should be lexically reminiscent of the explicit of the *Secretum* regarding the irresistible attraction of *amor et gloria.* In the *Secretum*, Petrarch writes: Franciscus: "Sed desiderium frenare non valeo". Augustinus: "**In antiquam litem relabimur**, voluntatem impotentiam vocas". The issue is resolved in the *Psalms*[330] which declare that there exists an *inebrietas* and a *voluptas* which can also save the soul. Indeed, in the *De otio*, Petrarch divides *amor* into a *summa voluptas* and *voluptas minor* where even the latter can be anagogical if it leads men to search for greater and greater pleasures and then, ultimately, the greatest one, God. This is the essence of the

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de la Rose and then spread throughout mediaeval literature.

[325] *De otio*, p.728.

[326] See pp. 77 & 312.

[327] *Fam.*, X 5,6.

[328] *De otio*, pp.732 & 746.

[329] *ibid.*, p.728.

[330] *Ps.*, 35, 9-10.

entire thirteenth century issue debated and promulgated by poets from Guinizzelli to Dante regarding the development of the theory of love, the donna-angelo and the donna Beatrice. This development is at the basis of Petrarch's canzone 70 *Lasso me*, and the whole secret nature of the entity called Laura. This is perhaps the Epicurean in Petrarch who, like Virgil before him, is irresistibly yet secretly attracted to the doctrine of the *via venerea*. That Epicureanism became widely known as *infamis* or *damnatum dogma* was primarily because of the fact that no explicit mention of God was made in this *via voluptuosa* and it denied the existence of individual souls. It had consequently been seen as responsible for men leading the lives of beasts.[331] Petrarch's appraisal of Epicurean *voluptas* is, however, consistent with his general imitation of Virgil who had also respected it. It, however, also echoes the *Psalm* quoted twice by Petrarch; "Ibunt de virtute in virtute; videbitur Deus deorum in Sion".[332] In parallel with the Peripatetics and Stoics, the Epicureans had reached their *summum bonum* by proceeding *de voluptate in voluptatem*. The *summum bonum* was also called Venus or the *venerea via* and was the height of Epicurean endeavour. Of course, Christian illumination went far beyond such classical heights, but this was not to the merit of individual Christians. Besides, even St Augustine had rather hurriedly had to admit that *summa felicitas* was only possible once every *necessitas* had ceased.[333] God had spontaneously chosen to bestow the light of truth upon Christian men of little genius who, in their stolid attachment to ignorance, often demonstrated that they really did not deserve it - so great was the love of God for frail men. Analogously, it was not the fault of the ancients that God did not show Himself to them. This is the supreme adynatic and oxymorical "infelix et

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[331] Cf. *If.*, 26, 118-120, "Considerate la vostra semenza:/ fatti non foste a viver come bruti,/ma per seguir virtute e conoscenza".
[332] *Ps.*, 83, 8 cit. in *De otio*, pp.772 & 778.
[333] Aug., *in ps.*, 86, 17, 24-5, "Morietur ibi omnis necessitas, orietur ibi summa felicitas".

ridiculosa felicitas in incendio refrigerium et in media morte vitam ponere".[334] God, however, did reveal the "causes of many things" to the ancients, and again Petrarch implicitly quotes Virgil's homage of Lucretius, that is, "multarumque rerum causae" – "Felix, qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas". In other words, Petrarch implicitly applauds those "philosophi magni et laboriosi homines" whose genius well exceeds that of most Christians.[335]

The monks of Montrieux lack the "active philosophical drive" (*negotium*)[336] of the ancients, just as the ancients lacked, though through no fault of their own, the Grace of God. Petrarch goes even further. With respect to the "agile et velox ingenium" of "Cicero et comites", among whom we might also imagine Lucretius, most Christians are definitely "tardiusculi". If, however, Cicero and his peers had known what Christians know, Petrarch has no doubt that they would have realised that their praise was really due to the Christian God. Petrarch also asserts rather daringly that not only should Cicero *et alii* have had a better destiny, but also that their nobility of genius should have deserved the special intervention of Divine Grace.[337] Petrarch felt that Lucretius, thanks to his extraordinary genius had not lived among those dwelling "in regione umbre mortis".[338] On the contrary, because of his "ferus ardor", he might not even have been sentenced to hell after death at all, but to "aliis locis".[339] Though not enlightened by the light of God, Lucretius was ardent enough to have been able to kick an entire series of *monstra* under his feet,

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[334] *De otio*, p.780.
[335] *ibid.*, pp.774-780. See also Farrington, 1952, pp.26 *et passim*.
[336] *De otio*, p.786. It can be inferred from the text that Petrarchan *negotium* semantically corresponds to Horatian or Senecan *otium*, and is offered as the terminological and etymological opposite to Gherardo's *otium*, ie. *nec - otium*.
[337] *ibid.*, p.794, "ita dico, ut nobilitas ingenii gratiam mereretur".
[338] *Is.*, IX, 2 in *De otio*, p.798.
[339] *Fam.*, XXIV 11, 17. Here, "sua morte" alludes to Lucretius' supposed suicide, however, the "ferus ardor", with the mention of Christ's descent to Hades to lay it waste of its treasures, means that Petrarch would like to think of Lucretius as "elsewhere", that is, not with Homer, and perhaps not in hell at all.

including inexorable fate, the uproar of greedy Acheron, the confusion of the world and the agitated abyss.[340]

In the 'Lucretian' atmosphere throughout both the second book of the *De otio* and the *Familiaris* X 3,[341] written and sent to Gherardo in 1348, Petrarch also draws a certain analogy between Epicurus and Christ. Petrarch's general conclusion in the two works is that one should operate as if both Christ and Epicurus were watching. The only difference, of course, is the fact that Christ really does watch and see everything, whereas Epicurus cannot. It is, however, a precept of Epicurus that everyone should be the imaginary witness of one's own life. Right throughout his literary production, Petrarch does just this. Such an analogy between Epicurus and Christ would instantly have been considered blasphemous. Let us keep in mind that the *De otio* and every other written document sent to the Monastery of Montrieux, even privately to Petrarch's own brother, (provided, that is, that these documents *were* really sent) passed through the hands of the Prior and, therefore, were subject to his approbation.[342] The analogy, however, is indeed present.

Similarly, in the *De otio* Petrarch introduces Apollo. This god born in Delos had abandoned his own augur in Thebes and, therefore, was not to be trusted.[343] According to Lactantius, Apollo was a false divinity like Jove[344] and not even exact in his oracles concerning human happiness.[345] However, this does not prevent Petrarch from considering the Apollonian *consilium* as highly beneficial for the soul. The conclusion would thus seem to be that Apollonian and Epicurean

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[340] Similarly, in his *Gen. deo. gent.* (ed. Guarino, 1964, p.xi), Boccaccio states with similar admiration that "the poets, though not Christians, were so gifted with intelligence that no product of human genius was ever more skilfully enveloped in fiction, nor more beautifully adorned with exquisite language, than theirs. Whence it is clear that they were richly imbued with secular wisdom not often found in their jealous accusers."

[341] *Fam.*, X 3, 48-9.

[342] Cochin, 1975, p.148.

[343] Statius *Theb.*, VII, 789-90 in *De otio*, p.796.

[344] *ibid.*, p.762.

[345] *ibid.*, p.784.

principles, when suitably filtered through Petrarch's programme of selective syncretism, may become highly useful also in Christian contexts. Like St Basil before him, and Petrarch's own contemporary, Pierre Bersuire, Petrarch has concretely demonstrated how to gain the most from the legacy of classical literature.[346] The Delphic *Nosce te ipsum*, explicitly quoted in the *De otio*,[347] becomes the classical anticipation of the Augustinian and Petrarchan, "Introeat pro se quisque in ipsa penetralia pectoris sui conscientiamque discutiat",[348] that is, a descent into Christian introspection. Analogously, Lucretian-style *meditatio* provides the gnoseological key for rising above the close confines of the mediaeval Scholastic and monastic tradition.

Whereas in the *Secretum*, such meditation and introspection specifically concerns *amor et gloria*, in the *De otio*, *amor* is analysed in the guise of *voluptas*. And here the analysis would again seem to be in a Lucretian style. Lucretian *voluptas* is the absolute equlibrium of feelings and senses in the individual who is at peace with his own disenchanted understanding of his limited human and mortal nature. To reach *voluptas* it is necessary to destroy myths, irrational terrors and passions. *Ratio* must overcome *religio*. Since nothing can be born from nothing,[349] not even the so-called gods could have come before the universe except *Voluptas*.[350] Death is not annihilation. It is, rather, a disgregation of eternal particles destined to return to the very essence of this loving cosmic force, and only then to form new aggregations. All this happens in a void in which the *clinamen* guarantees our

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[346] The *Oratio ad adolescentes* by the great doctor of the Greek Church would be considered a *magna charta* by Italian humanists and officially published in a Latin version in 1403 by the humanist from Arezzo, Leonardo Bruni (Laur. 25 sin. 9) who dedicates it to his friend, the Florentine cancelliere Coluccio Salutati. Petrarch, however, may have learnt about this *logos protreptikos* from the Basilian monk from Calabria, Barlaam of Seminara, see Gemmiti, 1989, pp.59-149; For Pierre Bersuire, see *Sen.*, XV 7 in Petrarca *Opera quae extant*, p.1059 and Voci, 1983, p.33.

[347] *De otio*, p.800.

[348] *ibid.*, p.786.

[349] Lucr., 1, 150, "nullam rem e nihilo gigni".

cosmic right to free will. *Sapiens* is he who manages to embrace this conception of the real structure of the universe knowing that he is an intrinsic, divine part of it – "et quasi cursores vitai lampada tradunt".[351] Such regenerating force in Nature is to be exalted, hence Lucretius's dedicatory hymn to Venus.[352] In this greater cosmic context real death does not exist. Death is literally only a transformation, not something final, the terrifying work of daimons or a reason for anguish. *Mortis metus* is vain and *contra naturam*, unnatural.

We cannot be at all sure that Petrarch's concept of *voluptas* was based directly or even indirectly on Lucretius. However, as I have included in the appendix on the Lucretian manuscript tradition, Lucretius's concept of *voluptas* had already been used in the ninth century within the Carolingian *Schola Palatina.* Here, a double meaning of Venus was developed whereby Lucretian *Voluptas* was considered as both the traditional mythological deity, Venus, and the creative power of Nature. In concomitance with the rise of Mariology, the Schola Palatina started exploring the possibility of considering Lucretian *voluptas* as a terminological antecedent of Theotokos.[353] Consequently, theological poets, or poetic theologians as the case may be, such as John Scotus, could literally superimpose the entire

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[350] Thus, the Epicurean atomic theory of the cosmos is not in fundamental contrast with the Christian *ex nihilo* theory.

[351] Lucr., 2, 79.

[352] The invocation to Venus is the proem for the entire poem *De rerum natura*, while every single book is preceded by an exaltation of Epicurus. Hollander (Hollander, 1977, p.31) states that in "four of Boccaccio's fictions, Filocolo, Fiammetta, Filostrato, and Teseida [...] the truth of Venus is twofold". She was *voluptuosa* and so exceedingly beautiful in her person that she led men to every type of fornication and lust. There is really only one type of *Amor* which, however, can change its characteristics and take on various names and paternities according to how it is expressed in the light of its object (*Gen. deo. gent.* 3, 22). Boccaccio points out that although the Stoics in regarding *voluptas* as abominable had interpreted Venus as a *vana res*, the Epicureans thought of it as *bona res* and had indeed found their *summum bonum* in *voluptas*. Boccaccio intreprets the Ciceronian view of Venus as being the fundamental nature and cause of all friendships (*Gen. deo. gent.* 3, 22). Boccaccio considers Venus and *voluptas* as covering the whole range of human interactions. The most brutish is base love, whereas the most philosophical is the first of Plato's three types of love, which is divine, where such a love can only dwell in an uncorrupt mind with rational virtue (*Gen. deo. gent.* 1, 15).

[353] *Theotokos* (Mother of God), as the Greek epithet of the Virgin Mary corresponding to *Dei genetrix*, was reintroduced in the West after the Council of Ephesus held in 431. See *Concilia Oecumenia. Concilium universale Ephesenum anno* 431, t.1, vol.1, part 1, p.8, line 3: θεοτοκος η αγια παρθενος

figure and role of the Virgin Mary onto the Lucretian Venus. In his poem, *Aulae sidereae*, Eriugena lexically, philosophically and even metrically models his "Magna dei genitrix, ter felix, sancta Maria" on Lucretius's "Aeneadum genetrix, hominum divumque voluptas/ alma Venus".[354] Having studied Virgil with Servius's and Macrobius's commentaries close at hand, John Scotus knew exactly how Virgil had 'stolen' from Lucretius. From his poetic endeavours it would well seem, however, that John Scotus also knew Lucretius directly. The "Aeneadum genetrix, hominum divomque, voluptas,/ alma Venus"[355] becomes, therefore, a symbol of the loving impulse of cosmic energy or Nature which perpetuates life. Whether or not Petrarch had direct or indirect access to the ideas contained in John Scotus's *Aulae Sidereae*, this is the type of equation Petrarch seems to be making between *Voluptas*, Mary, the Mother of God, and the regenerating life force of the Christian cosmos.

In Petrarch's *reductio ad unum* between his literary activity in Latin and in the vernacular, the double meaning, or, rather, the whole range of meanings of *voluptas* becomes a fascinating hermeneutical aide in understanding the role of Laura. Petrarch's muse can be a *fantasma* haunting the poet night and day with *turbulentissime visiones* of libidinous love. She can also be, however, the expedient for climbing *de voluptate in voluptatem* to the Virgin who will be connoted with many of the same characteristics which had been Lauran. Sturm-Maddox writes: "Throughout his life this figure (Laura) will be [...] both nymph and goddess,[356] not

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Μαρια.

[354] In John Scotus, even the dominions of the two *genetrices* are entirely analogous: Venus reigns over the "daedala tellus", the "aequora ponti" and the "caelum", and the Virgin reins over the "orbis", the "altum" (with connotations of the sea) and all "caeli". Obviously wanting at all costs to include the exquisitely Lucretian *hapax legomenon*, "daedala", which since Lucretius had only ever appeared in Virgil as an explicit homage to its coiner, John Scotus describes the magnificent church King Charles was building in the Virgin's honour as a "praeclaram [...] aedes [...] turres, luriculas, laquearia, **daedala** tecta".

[355] Lucr., 1, 1-2.

[356] *RVF*, 294, 4, "et ella è diva".

only Daphne but Aurora and Diana. She will be the Sofonisba of his Africa; in the *Rime* [...] she is both Medusa and Eurydice, both siren and *beatrice*. Late in life, in a letter[357] in which he offers an interpretation of the appearance of Venus to Aeneas in Virgil's poem, Petrarch will return to this familiar iconography to identify the goddess, her hair scattered to the wind, as *voluptas*."[358]

Sion

Petrarch's climbing up through the levels of love is part of a more general metaphor of the climb which constantly reappears throughout the *De otio.* However, no longer are we to follow the ancients, who had sought to have us believe that certain heroes and kings had found a way *ad celum* because, in reality, "eos veritas in Tartarum demersit".[359] In his *Somnium Scipionis*, Cicero had presented the most famous Roman of the Republic as happily dwelling in the Elysian Fields in the heavens. Despite the awe and reverence which Petrarch displays elsewhere for Scipio as a leader, he does state, nevertheless, that one must euhemeristically believe such accounts of pagan Elysian happiness to be the errors of the gentiles (including Cicero) who had thus engendered *falsa divinitas*. We must not choose any of the pathways which were purported to lead back to the sky, for they would only lead us astray.[360]

How should we start, however, this demanding climb? Again the answer is found amongst the *Psalms*: "Ibunt de virtute in virtutem; videbitur Deus deorum in Sion".[361] However, the pathway up to the peak of Sion is "arduus et angustus et

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[357] *Sen.*, IV, 5.
[358] Sturm-Maddox, 1992, p.288.
[359] *De otio*, p.750.
[360] *ibid.*, 772, "Ex omnibus igitur viis, quibus ad celum conscendisse sunt crediti qui ad inferna descenderant, nulla nobis elegenda est; non enim vie sed devia quedam sunt".
[361] *Ps.*, 83, 8.

scrupeus".[362] It is also "altus et confragosus".[363] The antithesis with Gherardo's "planum, rectum, tutum [et] delectabile" climb up to the top of Mount Ventoux is all too obvious. The only expedient that Petrarch suggests in his own scaling of Sion is to use "summa vis" and "omne studium" which is a "durum opus et laboriosum [...] sed salubre".[364] We must incite the ass on which we ride through this life, our body, which is naturally lascivious and recalcitrant. We must tune the "inner ear" of the *homo interior* to ward off the assaults of our Adversary, where, again, we must remember that "quo pertinacior hostis, eo clarior Victoria".[365] It is all a question of refining our virtues in order to contemplate God more clearly– "Per virtutes igitur ad videndum itur".[366].

Petrarch's "scaling of Sion" is directly reminiscent of Jacob's ladder in Genesis.[367] The ladder-topos had already been used by Plato and Plotinus to signify the intellectual ascending of the soul towards the idea. In Judaeo-Christian literature, the metaphor symbolised the progression of the soul and its return to heaven.[368] In specifically Christian apologetic exegesis, Jacob alludes to Christ and the ladder to the future cross.[369] In his dream, Jacob had seen angels climbing up and down a ladder which led to heaven. St Benedict explains this as "exaltatione descendere et humilitate ascendere".[370] For the Saint from Norcia, such a ladder was placed in human life with our body and soul as its sides.[371] St Benedict then describes the twelve rungs of the ladder as the steps necessary for the monk to

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[362] *De otio*, p.736.
[363] *ibid.*, p.772.
[364] Petrarch's use of *salubre* transparently reminds us of *salus* meaning spiritual salvation.
[365] *ibid.*, pp.736-8.
[366] *ibid.*, p.772. For the contrast between Petrarch's climb and Gherardo's, see Constable, 1980, p.97.
[367] *Gen.* 28, 12.
[368] Penco, 1960, pp.99-113; Pricoco, 1985-6, pp.41-58.
[369] Pricoco, 1995, p.327.
[370] *Regula sancti Benedicti* VII *De humilitate*, 7 "to descend in self-exaltation and to ascend in humility".
[371] *ibid.*, 8-9.

humble himself until he feels inferior and more vile than everybody else[372] and, therefore, constantly about to be punished by the "tremendum iudicium" of God.[373] For the so-called founder of Western monasticism, descent and ascent are inversely proportional, but it is the descent that gauges the climb, not vice versa. If the religious person is seeking to "adtingere et ad exaltationem illam caelestem", then he must first of all descend as if to hell.[374] Here Petrarch might also have been thinking of Juno's "Flectere si nequeo Superos; Acheronta movebo".[375] The concept, however, is analogous to what we saw above regarding St Benedict, Hugh of St Victor, Barlaam and Lucretius: in order to ascend, one must first descend.

It would seem, therefore, that Petrarch operates another gnoseological shift. The climb does not begin with immediate ascension. On the contrary, the first direction is necessarily downwards. The pathway back to God can, in fact, be likened to an "iter [...] per opacas valles et prata roscida, per frondosos et faciles colles, secus amenas et floreas fluminum ripas". Only at the end of the day shall we see what Augustine called the City of God[376] or Sion. Within the semantic field of the same metaphor of the pathway which proceeds both *de virtute in virtutem* and *de voluptate minori in voluptatem summam*, Petrarch then hypothesizes;

> Si enim fesso viatori tam suavis est cespes herbosus et sub umbra arboris exiguus fons, quale est inter mortalis vite molestias invenisse "fontem aque salientis in vitam eternam" et umbram illam, sub qua non ad brevis hore spatium neque ab estu solis tantum, sed in eternum ab omni adversitate protegamur et ab omni metu?"[377]

This Petrarchan hypothesis deserves some discussion. It is a full description of the mediaeval topos of the *locus amoenus*. The traveller is weary because the pathway

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[372] *ibid.*, 51.
[373] *ibid.*, 64.
[374] *ibid.*, 5.
[375] *Aen.*, 7, 213.
[376] *De otio*, p.772.

to Sion is arduous, narrow, rocky and extremely steep. Yet he comes across a grassy meadow in the middle of which there is a tree under whose shade he finds a font of water springing to eternal life. The spring, therefore, has a dual meaning. That is, it is both a source of water and a baptismal font. Petrarch's description of the *locus amoenus* is, in reality, reminiscent of the explicit of the *Secretum* and an *amplificatio* of *Psalm* 72,28, which Petrarch quotes later in his treatise:

> Ille nobis exorandus est ut "sub umbra alarum suarum protegat nos a facie impiorum qui nos afflixerunt" et gravi exercitio fatigatos sacro foveat amplexu, miseratus ne in nichilum relabamur[378]

This "umbra" is also the *umbra tua* of the last of his *Psalmi penitentiales*, the protective shade of God where he as dust, a fleeting shadow and a single puff of wind in a gale, might find solace.[379] By contaminating the image of the stag in the *Psalms*,[380] (***fontes** aquarum*) and Paul,[381] (*thronum **gratiae***), Petrarch alludes to this very spot when he writes, "Ita ergo cum Apostolo sitibundi recurramus ad **fontem gratie**, ne in nostra ariditate pereamus".[382] This stag is, however, also the snow-white doe of sonnet 190. Thus we realise that the *locus amoenus* is really Vaucluse. Indeed, here, "inter flumina Babilonis" Petrarch then sits and weeps "inque amaris salicibus" and hangs his "organa".[383] It is in this setting that Petrarch finds his poetic inspiration.

In other words, a *voluptas minor* can lead to the *voluptas summa*.[384] And it is here that to see the holy mountain of Sion becomes "beatificam visionem, ascensu

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[377] *ibid.*, p.774.
[378] *De otio*, p.800.
[379] *Ps.*, 7, 16, 17.
[380] *Ps.*, 41, "Quemadmodum desiderat cervus ad fontes aquarum".
[381] *Hbr.*, 4, 16, "adeamus ergo cum fiducia ad thronum gratiae ut misericordiam consequamur et gratiam inveniamus in auxilio oportuno".
[382] *De otio*, cf. p.720 & p.774.
[383] *Ps.* 136, 1-2, cit. in *De otio*, p.786; cf. Aug., *in ps.*, 136, 3, 27-9.
[384] For this idea of *voluptuosa successio* referred to Petrarch's works in the vernacular, see Santagata who writes, (Santagata, 1990, p.339) "... l'amore, non comportando necessariamente l'abdicazione

animi et sacris atque altis cogitationibus opus".[385] Alternatively, we might say that an ascension of the soul corresponds to a deepening of one's reflections, a descent through the "opacae valles"[386], the Augustinian "dolores inferni"[387] (again Petrarch's 'Hadean' Vaucluse) of one's inner self in order to find the grassy opening containing the *locus amoenus* and *fons vitae (et gratiae)*, which is the *homo interior*. It is here that Petrarch receives his second baptism (quand'io caddi ne l'acqua)[388] and may then begin the ascension. He will do this via a *descensus ad inferos*, the death of Madonna Laura, and by being 'more present to himself' (as he promises at the end of the *Secretum* and on the top of Mt Ventoux).

That Vaucluse is Petrarch's 'Hades' is demonstrated throughout the *De otio*. For example, he invites all willing persons to enter into this river on whose banks he is *now* writing, "Intret aliquis exempli causa in hunc ipsum, cuius *hec* vobis ad ripam *scribo*".[389] When Petrarch beseeches the Lord to save him from the waters, as if he were a latter-day Tantalus, he writes, "Nullum tamen ex omnibus flumine hoc, in quo *nunc* stilus hic remigat, aut perpetuum magis aut rapidum".[390] More explicitly still, as we saw above, while paraphrasing *Psalm* 29, Petrarch equates his descent into the corruption of the flesh with his fall from the cliff overhanging the Sorgue where he is *now* writing, "[...] cernuus in imum Sorgie fontem cadat [...]".[391]

If the "opacae valles" and the spot "inter flumina illa"[392] are an allusion to Vaucluse, then the two rivers are the Durence and the Sorgue. In several works Petrarch etymologizes the Sorgue thus obtaining an allusion to resurrection.[393]

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alla libertà, può essere scala alla virtù, strada che attraverso il bello conduce al buono".
[385] *De otio*, p.778.
[386] *De otio*, p.772.
[387] Aug., *in ps.*, 5, 11-18.
[388] *RVF* 190, 14.
[389] *De otio*, p.702.
[390] *ibid.*, p.722.
[391] *De otio*, p.734. See p. 43, nn. 147-148.
[392] *De otio*, p.772.
[393] *Sin. nom.*, II 2, "Sorga = sorgens"; *Epyst. Metr.*, III 15, *Epyst. Extrav.*, (*Var.*, 42.1) "Sorgia=surgit".

Analogously we might see in the Durence an allusion to either the hardship (*durezza*) of his task, or his en*durence*. If Petrarch starts out from such a *locus amoenus* in his climb of Mount Sion, then the mountain in question is none other than Mt Ventoux. Petrarch, as the sinner *par excellence*, that is, like a Tantalus representing all the errors of humanity, has descended for humanity. In the first *Familiaris* to be analysed, the *Fam.*, IV 1 describing the climb of Mt Ventoux, we shall see that he also ascends to the Son, also for humanity.

The similar atmosphere and lexis of the incipit of *De otio* and sonnet 190 induced me at the beginning of this chapter to hypothesize that there might also be parallels of a poetical and ideological nature. The hypothesis would seem to be founded. The lexis, poetics and ideological *intentio* of sonnet 190, both books of the *De otio* and certain parts of the *Secretum* including the explicit, are sufficiently similar to suggest a common genesis.[394] In an Augustinian sense, Vaucluse, Petrarch's *locus amoenus*, is the "tabernaculum [...] Dei mei in terra".[395] It is only here that he may find the pathway to Sion.[396] It is here that he finds a new sweetness (again, Cicero's sweet *otium*), that is, an "interiorem [...] et occultam voluptatem, tamquam de domo Dei sonaret suaviter aliquod organum".[397] Within the nautical metaphor, Vaucluse is also the port to which he was directing the ship of his life - a port in antithesis, therefore, with the more traditional port of Jerusalemite monasticism exemplified by his brother. Petrarch's *cameretta* of sonnet 234 in Vaucluse is, therefore, the "notus procellarum animi mei portus".[398] Only here on his *letticciuol* may Petrarch, the warrior, rest. Again here, however, the sweetness is also a bitterness, inasmuch as this seeming repose (*otium*) will not be restful at all.

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[394] See also Santagata, 1993, p.304.
[395] Aug., *in ps.*, 41, 9, 12.
[396] *ibid.*, 9, 3, "Sed hic quaerendus est, quia in tabernaculo invenitur via qua pervenitur ad domum".
[397] *ibid.*, 9, 37.
[398] *Fam.*, V 1, 5, reminiscent of *Psalmus penitentialis* VII 5, "Securus in periculis, letus in erumnis;

In the *Psalmi penitentiales* his "thalamus" becomes a "purgatorium", where his "lectulus" is "lacrimarum conscius mearum"[399] (again, bitter tears engendering better vision). Indeed, it was from such a *lectulus* that St Gregory also set sail in *otium* and *vacatio* in order to see the Lord better.[400] And Petrarch's purgatory was to continue for some time yet, not only in the *Psalmi*,[401] but also in the *fragmenta.* After sonnet 190, the *parte in morte di Madonna Laura* was to begin, that is, Petrarch's supreme *cogitatio mortis*. This would, in turn, end with the *Canzone alla Vergine* – a hard climb down to the *ipsa penetralia pectoris* in concomitance with the rising of the sun. Let us recall the imagery of sonnet 190, *Et era 'l sol già volto al mezzo giorno, / gli occhi miei stanchi di mirar, non sazi,/ quand'io caddi ne l'acqua, et ella sparve*. The sun now starts its descent. The poetic pilgrim has fallen into the baptismal font in the middle of the *locus amoenus* where a snow-white doe had led him. Here he is cleansed in a second baptism which is his re*sur*rection (*Sor*gue). Now he must begin his ascent. He will be protected, however, *sub tegmine lauri*, protected, that is, by the branches-arms-wings of this divine Apollonian Christ.[402] Only on the last day of his life, or the last poetic composition of this symbolic year, no. 366, might he have a chance of reaching true *felicitas*.

The allusivity of Petrarch's language has one goal: he wants to act for the Carthusians as the doe had acted for him. Indeed the lexical parallels in the incipit had already established a gnoseological relationship between Petrarch and the doe. He wants to lead Gherardo and his new brethren on this *ascensus animi* (which

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mediis portum in tempestatibus putavi".

[399] *Ps.*, 2, 17.

[400] *in Ez.*, 2, 7, 2 = *P.L.*, 76, 1020., "In lectulo enim dilectum quaerit, quando in ipso suo otio et vacatione quam appetit iam videre anima Dominum concupiscit", cit. in Leclercq, 1963, p.40.

[401] *Ps.*, 3, 8, "Libera me de suppliciis eternis; sit michi pars purgationis labor meus, quo hic per singulos dies exerceor."

[402] Notice that the Virgilian *sub tegmine fagi* of *Buc.*, 1 1 probably derives from Lucr., 2, 663, "sub tegmine caeli", which is a stylistic choice consistent with Lucretian philosophy. See *Encic. Virg.* Vol. III, p.265. It is interesting, and in line with my current argument, that the arms of Laura, or the branches of the laurel tree, should ultimately represent the protection of an Epicurean heaven.

necessarily means *descensus ad inferos* through *sacrae atque altae cogitationes*) to the tabernacle in the heart of the *locus amoenus*. Only here can *dyaletica* return to be *theologia* and *scientia* become again *sapientia*. Only here can Gherardo's Carthusians be taught to cultivate sound monastic humanism and thus discover true happiness.

De vera felicitate

In the incipit of *De otio* Petrarch had defined Gherardo's new brethren as the *felix Christi familia*. Their *felicitas*, however, now requires urgent re-qualification. Indeed, Petrarch writes; "felix, qui totius vie devium et longe lucis errorem facili compendio correxit ad vesperam".[403] Did not David, though forgetful of all the gifts God had bestowed on him and burdened with the weight of many crimes, receive forgiveness? Did not Saul, the tenacious persecutor of Christ, also become St Paul who was gladly persecuted for Christ? Let us not forget Augustine who had strenuously fought against the true faith only to fight for it.[404] And, as we shall see better in the third chapter, Mary Magdalene was also radically transformed from a "mulier peccatrix [...] de cive babilonica" to a "Ierusalem celestis civis". She was so profoundly *reformata* that she was placed in heaven among the holy virgins, second only to the Mother of Christ.[405] Perhaps, then, there was a chance of salvation even for one who had fallen down a cliff face from the height of innocence to the bottom of the Sorgue. Perhaps one day Petrarch too will be re-admitted into the Kingdom of Heaven.

True happiness, *vacatio* and correct vision are the underlying themes of the explicit of the *De otio*, and it is all, as we shall soon see, a question of salt. The

[403] *De otio*, p.682.
[404] In fact, the model offered by Augustine in the *Confessions* will be *the* model of conversion at the forefront of Petrarch's mind.

bitterness of the tears Petrarch sheds on his "letticciuol" adynatically corresponds to the sweetness of his Ciceronian-Senecan type *otium*. It is the salt contained in his tears which has allowed him to see more clearly. At the end of the *De otio*, this is exactly the sense in which we must interpret the quote from the *Apocalypse* concerning the medicating of the eyes.[406] Petrarch writes, "bono collirio linistis oculos".[407] Petrarch's method of allusivity forces us, however, to look at the greater context from which the quote is extrapolated. We see that, for Petrarch, the Carthusians are like the members of the church of Laodicea, who were neither cold nor hot, but only lukewarm. In the *Apocalypse*, these members would be spat out of the mouth of God to be no longer part of the mystical body of Christ. The Laodiceans believed they were wealthy and not in need of anything. St John, instead, believed that they were wretchedly and pitiably poor, not to mention blind and naked. This fact supports my hypothesis according to which Petrarch turned his paraphrase of the Beatitudes, "Ve vobis qui saturi estis, quia esurietis",[408] directly against Gherardo and the Carthusian brethren of Montrieux. Throughout the text, Petrarch has continually reminded the monks that, though now ostensibly safe *in portu*, it is also true that they were all born and tried by their previous lives spent in Babylon.[409] Indeed, through the reference to the squares of Babylon, the passage recalls Augustine pre-conversion, and through the "wanting to see, to please and to be seen by the eyes of the crazy" it recalls Petrarch and Gherardo described in the "meministi series" in *Familiaris* X 3 11-13 before Gherardo's entry into the

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[405] *De otio*, p.682.
[406] *Apoc.*, 3,18, "collyrio inunge oculos tuos ut videas".
[407] *De otio*, p.808. An intermediate source may have been Aug. *conf.* 7,8, "Et residebat tumor meus ex occulta manu medicinae tuae, aciesque conturbata et contenebrata mentis meae **acri collyrio** salubrium dolorum de die in diem sanabatur". See also, *Fam.*, III 13, 6, "Heu quam multa sunt bona que vel nesciendo vel negligendo perduntur! Ignorantia cecitas mentis est, negligentia torpor est animi; aperire oculos oportet, et que salutaria se se offerunt non diferre".
[408] *Lc.*, 6,25.

Carthusian Order.[410] If it is true that "Nullus hominum sine peccato est", then even these "dominice apes", "bene nata gens" and "felix Cristi familia"[411] could well afford to delve down to their removed Babylonian nature in order to analyse it, check it and perhaps even become better Christians for it. However, in turning their backs on this Babylonian *id* as something pestiferous for the soul, they have also literally become insipid in the etymological sense, that is, *in-sapientes*. After all, Seneca, in his treatise *De otio* (which Petrarch never explicitly mentions), states that the position of those who only engage in contemplation without action "non portus est" but a "statio".[412] Via Petrarch's direct intratextual allusion, we gather that the monks of Montrieux have become like the "iumenti insipientes"[413] of the *Psalms* on which death feeds.

Bees

We have seen that two of the three epithets used for the Carthusians at the beginning of the *De otio*, namely, "bene nata gens" and "felix Cristi familia", are then resemantized by Petrarch throughout the work from the points of view of predestination and true *felicitas* respectively. The epithet "dominice apes"[414] is no exception.

Before Swammerdam discovered in the seventeenth century that the leader of a bee hive was a queen, right throughout antiquity and the middle ages it had been thought that the leader of the hive, given its extremely efficient hierarchical

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[409] *De otio*, p.696, "neque enim monachus sum natus; de seculo veni, Babilone versatus sum"; p.706 "dum inter accolas Babilonis, [...], per illarum plateas ac porticos errabatis [...]. Fingete vero nunc vobis reditum ad easdem urbes".

[410] *De otio*, p.706, "per illarum plateas ac porticus errabatis, in templis non orandi animo, in foro non mercandi studio, sed spectaculis occupati, ut scilicet videretis et videremini et placeretis oculis insanorum". The 'meministi series' is a term I have coined for commodity when referring to a particular part of the *Fam.* X 3, which I analyse in the chapter on the *Famliares* below.

[411] Incipital epithets for the monks of Montrieux, in *De otio*, pp.568-570.

[412] Sen., *Ad Serenum de otio*, 7, 4.

[413] *Ps.*, 48, 12, 15 cit. in *De otio*, p.698.

nature, was a *rex*, an *imperator*, a masculine *dux*. It corresponded, via analogy, to the bull of a bovine herd. The drones or *fuci*, were not, however, considered as females for this sole male, but rather as sterile animals and, therefore, as utterly chaste, given that "they did not know Venus". In the *Georgics*, Virgil writes that Jupiter had created two types of bee, the *apis* which, with a "divina mens",[415] laboriously works alone during the summer for the well-being of the entire hive all year round, and the *fucus* which, like an "ignavum pecus",[416] sits "ad portas",[417] "sedens aliena ad pabula",[418] "ignav[us]" and "pig[er]".[419] A dichotomy is established between the two types of bee. The bee working outside the hive eventually produces the honey within. It is this bee that Virgil exalts in the *Aeneid* for its laboriousness and gifts of prophecy.[420] It is this type of bee producing "ybleum mel", (*ybleum* = from Mt Ibla in Sicily, famous for its honey production), that becomes the metaphor of the philosophical poet.[421] The poet who is not a monkey will indeed produce honey like this type of bee.[422] The second bee does not produce anything, but lazily and parasitically sits at the hive, destined, however, to be killed. Indeed, by the age of Pliny, the *ignavia* of the *fuci* destined to be killed is

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[414] *ibid.*, p.570.
[415] *Georg.*, IV 220.
[416] *ibid.*, IV 168.
[417] *ibid.*, IV 165.
[418] *ibid.*, IV 244.
[419] *ibid.*, IV 259.
[420] *Aen.*, I 430-36; VI 706-09; VII 64-7. An opposite version is Cicero's description of Laertes' farm, where the bees are interpreted as beings void of intellect whose sole aim is to propagate and preserve the species and meet the needs of man. (This interpretation of *Cato maior de senectute* 15, 54, "nec vero segetibus..." is contained, together with more information on bees in antiquity, in Della Corte, 1984, pp.211-212.) In other words, while Ulysses was having his adventures throughout every known world, apiculture was what the unproductive ignorant did to mark time.
[421] Petrarch *De vita sol.* I 2, 4; *metr.*, I, 1, 10; *Inv. cont. med.*, 2, 1; *Rer. mem.*, 2, 35, 3; *Fam.*, III 19, 6; *Fam.*, IX 5, 6; *Fam.*, XX 14, 11; *ecl.*, VIII 127; Boccaccio *Epist.* XIX, 5, "Consedimus tandem eo iubente, et dum mirabundus eius verba susciperem, ratus sum ipsius sub lingua ybleum mel fore, quod in os parvuli Platonis dormientis iamdudum congessere apes, tanta perlita dulcedine ex eo mellita progrediebantur verba". For such poetic/philosophical honey, see Bocc. *Esposizioni* IV (I) 276; Cic., *De divin.* 1, 36; Val. Max., *Fact. et dict. mem.*, 1, 6, ext.3; & John of Salisbury *Policraticus* 1, 13 & *Libellus de vita et moribus philosophorum* 30.
[422] *Fam.*, XXIII 19, 13, "Utendum igitur ingenio alieno utendumque coloribus, abstinendum verbis; illa enim similitudo latet, hec eminet; illa poetas facit, hec simias. Standum denique Senece consilio, quod ante Senecam Flacci erat, ut scribamus scilicet sicut apes mellificant, non servatis floribus sed in

even used to describe other categories of animals of similar constitutions.[423] The analogy with the dichotomy between Francesco and Gherardo would seem to an extension of this distinction between the two different types of bee.

The hive was also a metaphor, drawn from the above-mentioned Virgilian tradition, for the mediaeval monastic settlement. For example, one of the Desert Fathers, St Anthony, to whom Petrarch alludes in the *Familiaris* IV 1, is described as an "apis sapiens" and an "amicus Dei" because he worked with his own hands, thus combining *vita activa* with *vita contemplativa.*[424] Indeed, it was on manual labour that Thomas de Cantimpré O.P. based his book on bees to which I referred earlier. But when he writes, "conversis labor est utilis", he is referring to the Cistercians who, in their haughty refusal to do any manual labour, are "ociosi".[425] This is similar to St Augustine's *De opere monachorum* written against the monks of Capraria who did not think that manual labour should be part of their *otium monasticum.*[426] It is in this Virgilian tradition that Petrarch explains to Tommaso of Messina that, in order to *invenire* topics and transform them with one's *ingenium* into *callidae iuncturae*, one should imitate bees.[427] Anyone not wishing to imitate the metamorphosing and converting activity of bees while in the flower of youth is part of the "vulgus indoctum" driven by "ignavia".[428] Given the allusion discussed above to Dante's "ignavi" of *If.* III,[429] and of Virgil's *fuci ignavi* of *Georg.* IV,[430]

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favos versis, ut ex multis et variis unum fiat, idque aliud et melius".

[423] *Nat. Hist.* XVII 44, "Est et aliud genus culicum, quos vocant centrinas, fucis apium similes ignavia malitiaque cum pernicie verorum et utilium; interimunt enim illos atque ipsi moriuntur".

[424] *Vita Antonii* 3, 4. Cf. *Fam.*, IV I 30-33.

[425] Thomas de Cantimpré, *Liber apum aut de apibus mysticis sive de proprietatibus apum seu universale bonum*, ed. Paris, W. Hopyl, 1510, fol. 22v, Pars II, Cap. 6, Par 2 [conversis labor est utilis]: Non mihi indignentur perversi tales [*scil.* Cistercian conversi] si eos ad opera cogi suadeam. Multa mala docuit ociositas. Regnantem David deiecit otium, quem bella non poterant. Quid ergo tales? Mihi credas experto quos tales in cenobio viderim, qui in laboribus manuum devote et sancte vixerunt, expositi vero officiis vel ocio et quodammodo redditi libertati, irreparabiliter ceciderunt.

[426] *CSEL*, 41 (1900), 531-595.

[427] *Fam.*, I 8, 2, "apes in inventionibus imitandas, que flores, non quales acceperint, referunt, sed ceras ac mella mirifica quadam permixtione conficiunt" *et passim.*

[428] Respectively *Fam.*, I 8, 9 & 6.

[429] See p. 51, n. 177.

Petrarch had the authorisation to redefine the epithet "Dominice apes" used at the beginning of the *De otio*. Seeing that Gherardo *had* given up all independent intellectual activity while still in the flower of youth, and was now literally sitting "ad portas" (like "in portu") and "aliena ad pabula", he was not a bee, but a drone. Over the centuries the monastic metaphor of Virgilian origin may have likened all monks to the 'busy bees of the Lord', but, in the light of classical *otium litteratum* and a direct application of the Virgilian metaphor, the Carthusians should better have been called *fuci ignavi diabolici.*

In this light the parallel with the *De remediis* is perfect. Petrarch writes that the beehive is not only deadly, but will make one's happiness "volatilis et fugitiva". If, by entering the beehive, you think you will be the wealthier, you will actually be naked. If you think you will be able to combine "servandi studium cum melle", you will only produce "bitter honey".[431]

We can see, therefore, that Petrarch draws on two separate traditions:- the *Psalms* and Virgilian-monastic metaphor. The results, however, are entirely analogous. In the one, Gherardo and his new brethren are "iumenti insipientes", and in the other, they are "fuci ignavi".[432] This is why, at the end of the *De otio*, Petrarch invites the Carthusian monks to season their souls with the "salutifer sal" from the pillar of salt into which Lot's wife had been transformed.[433] This seasoning or spicing must also have some conceptual correlation with Petrarch's "spicing" of the text with classical quotations. Seeing that these monks do not cry the bitter (salt-bearing) tears characteristic of Petrarch's 'sweet' *otium*, they should cleanse their

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[430] See p. 102, nn.416-419.

[431] *De rem.*, 62, *De pavonibus, pullis, gallinis, apibus et columbis*, 9-12.

[432] For an analogous association between *ignavia*, *insipientia*, *vacatio* and *otium*, see Boccaccio, *De casibus*, 8, 1, eg. §1 "ignavia mea [...] in amplissimum ocium"; §7 "Quid iaces, ociorum professor egregie?"; §9 "stulta seductus ignavia"; §17 "Ignave mentis", "celebre studium"; §27 "ignaviam", "vacuus"; § 31 "insipidos".

[433] *Gen.*, 19, 26 cit. in *De otio*, p.808, "Statua salis, in quam mulier retro respiciens versa est, animas vestras salutifero sale condiverit".

eyes with a *bonum collyrium* which, presumably, contains salt. The adjective *salutifer*, meaning "salvation bearing", is in the same semantic sphere and etymological group as *salubre* and *sapientia* (*sapidus*) which, as we saw above in connection to the "durum opus" of climbing Sion,[434] leads to spiritual deliverance. The salt in the Carthusians' eye ointment, just like the salt in Petrarch's bitter tears, leads to S*apientia*. Again, learning and correct vision is the key to the climb to God.[435]

Lot's Wife

Given the disparate interpretative traditions regarding the metamorphosis of a backward-looking woman into a pillar of salt, a correct exegesis of Petrarch's specific use will also prove arduous. Beyond the obvious citation of the well-known Old Testament episode, we might immediately think of the topos in classical literature of turning around to see. The most famous, of course, is the plight of Orpheus and Eurydice. Orpheus cannot wait to see his wife again, so before quitting Hades he turns to glance at her and subsequently loses her forever to the world of shadows.[436] Similarly, Amaryllis must carry the embers out and cast them into a flowing river. Alphesiboeus calls out to her not to look - *Nec respexeris*! - lest Daphnis be warned of her presence.[437] Daphnis was a beautiful son of Mercury and a shepherd in Sicily. Daphnis had invented pastoral songs. Capturing Daphnis would mean, therefore, harnessing the power of poetry. In classical literature, turning back to look means having to lose something cherished. Let us now look at the more obvious biblical and patristic interpretations.

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[434] See p. 93, n.364.
[435] Cf. Bocc. *Epist.*, XIX 17, "orationes poetico sale sapidas, helyconicis floribus ornatas, castalio latice dulces fieri".
[436] Ovid *met.*, 10, 51; *Fasti* V 439; see also Virg. *Georg.*, 4, 491.
[437] Virgil *Ecl.*, 8, 100-1.

According to many Church Fathers, Lot's wife was punished because of her moral and material attachment to the city of Sodom.[438] She becomes an unanimated thing, a stone without a soul. She is literally petrified. The city of Sodom, together with four others, was destroyed by the two angels whom Lot had taken in and protected from the Sodomites. The five cities on the Dead Sea were destroyed with fire and brimstone because of their disobedience to God in the laws governing sexual behaviour and hospitality. Along these lines, when dealing with the Apocalypse, Luke[439] adduces the case of Lot's wife as an emblematic example of the unwise attachment to earthly possessions. Luke invites us all to be ready to be saved when the destruction comes, wherever we may be. We must not turn backwards thinking that we might save some of our possessions. In the *Book of Wisdom*,[440] the pillar of salt is a "monument to an unbelieving soul", and the wicked inhabitants of the five cities destroyed are remembered for their "insipientia", again, a lack of salt and wisdom. The statue, then, is a symbol of what we must remember: even though we once dwelt in evil, we must go on with the superior knowledge of true destiny.

Another ancient tradition sees in this statue an emblem of the Church as "salt of the earth". Whereas the statue itself remains intact in support of Christian faith, its limbs become eradicated.[441] Similarly, according to Luke, Jesus states that "No one keeping his hand on the plough and looking backwards is suitable for the kingdom of God."[442] Origen develops this into his spiritual theology which, in turn, will be developed by Gregory of Nyssa with the concept *epektasis*, a forward urge.

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[438] St Irenaeus *Adv. Haer.*, IV, 31 t. VII, col. 1008-70 & t. VIII, col. 1070; Origen *Hom. V in Gen.*, t. XII, col. 190-4; *Cont. Celsum* IV, 45, t. XI, col. 1101-4; St John Chrysostomus *Hom. XLIV in Gen.*, t. LIV, col. 411-2; St Ambrose *De Abraham* I, 6, t. XIV, col. 441.

[439] *Lc.*, 17, 9; 17 31-3; Cf. *Mc.*, 13, 16.

[440] *Sap.*, 10, 7.

[441] This tradition was inherited by the Greek-speaking Ireneus who passed it on to the Latin west when he moved from Smyrna to Lyon in Gallia around 170 A.D.

[442] *Lc.*, 9,62, "Nemo mittens manum suam ad aratrum et respiciens retro aptus est regno Dei."

The episode of Lot's wife thus becomes one of the most edifying *exempla* of the entire Bible.[443]

The plight of Lot's wife is not specific to this woman alone. Her situation is, in many ways, linked to the errors her husband had made beforehand. Lot had not simply happened to be in Sodom, he had knowingly chosen it. The errors began when Abraham and Lot were returning from slavery in Egypt. Because of the barrenness of the land, discord broke out amongst the men under the two patriarchs, presumably over grazing and watering rights. Abraham decided to divide the two groups giving his nephew, who is designated as his 'brother',[444] the first choice of how to divide up the land. Lot took the better half leaving arid Hebron for Abraham. Lot chose to go east into the Jordan valley, where there were already some mighty cities, including Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham, instead, was left with the opposite way. It was here, however, that Abraham founded a sanctuary in the wilds of Canaan. The brother who had gone east only finds sin and destruction, whereas the brother who had gone west founds a nation as numerous as the grains of sand of the desert. In the chapter dedicated to the *Familiares*, we shall see how this biblical story is connected to Petrarch's version of the founding of Montrieux, his own relationship with Gherardo and the question of life choice and direction.

It is in the longer work on religious life, *De vita solitaria*, that Petrarch suggests yet another interpretation for Lot's wife who had been turned into a pillar of salt.[445] Lot had remained mindful of the laws governing hospitality and righteous

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[443] Harl, 1986, pp.182-183.

[444] In *Gen.*, 13,8 Abraham calls himself and Lot "brothers". Lot was, however, Haran's son, therefore, Abraham's nephew.

[445] *De vita sol.*, II X, p.486, "Unde est quod non ducem Deum sed concupiscentias suas secuti quidam in solitudine corruerunt; nec ignotum habeo ut Loth, iustus in Sodomis, in monte peccavit, quanquam enim quid fecerit ignoravit, ut ait Ieronimus, et quanquam voluntas non sit in crimine, tamen error in culpa est. Hoc est ergo in quo excusari vir in ceteris iustus et integer non possit, quod ita se vino obrui passus est, ut vel ignorans probrum illud admitteret, quod cogitare sciens ac sobrius horruisset; levo pede igitur ascendit in montem melius forte mansurus in Segor, quam imbecillitati sue sedem sponte delegerat".

sexual conduct for only as long as he had remained in Sodom, the city of sin *par excellence*. When he leaves the city his wife is turned into a pillar of salt and he is overcome by wine to the extent that he unknowingly commits incest with his two daughters. The message Petrarch is making is fully in line with one of the fundamental basic contentions espoused ever since the beginning the *De otio*: "Nam virtus in infirmitate perficitur". For both St Paul and Petrarch, the freedom to sin is indeed the essence of virtue. Lot remained virtuous for as long as he remained in Sodom and his *imbecillitas* was put to the test. This is the justification for Petrarch's decision not to enter the cloister and to continue fighting against his infernal *fantasmata*. Providing the forward urge or *epektasis* of the soul is towards righteousness and *sapientia*, looking back towards, or indeed down into, our Babylonian selves, and staying there, can be sapiential. The salvation-bearing salt of this pillar would seem to implicitly allude to one of the distinctions between Petrarch and Gherardo analysed at the beginning of this chapter. In this light Cochin was right to say that "les dangers sont profitables".[446] *Descensus ad inferos*, or to one's Babylonian self, might very well be, instead, a *descensus ad superos*.[447]

The last period of the *De otio*, in the light of the present discussion, is also a type of challenge. Petrarch implicitly alludes to Lucretius once again as the explicit of the entire treatise, "O felices, si vos ipsos et bona vestra cognoscitis". Here, however, he has modified Virgil's exaltation of Lucretius, "Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas", for his own purposes. Virgil's "rerum causae" are now the "bona" and the real identity "vos ipsos" of the Carthusians. More importantly, the *felicitas* hoped for here at the end of the *De otio* is diametrically opposed to the Carthusian definition of *felicitas* at the beginning of the *De otio*, as in the syntagma, *felix Cristi familia*. The invitation is for the monks of Montrieux to "intima rerum

[446] Cochin, 1975, p.169.

introspicere superficiemque contemnere". It is an invitation to scrutinise their souls and to more generally address the *ubi consistam* question. Right throughout the *De otio*, Petrarch challenges the Carthusian definition of *otium* in the light of classical genius. In exactly the same way, he re-qualifies the term *felicitas*.[448] Effectively what Petrarch is doing here is to unmask yet another one of the illusions or *fantasmata* of mortal life. If ever Gherardo and his Carthusian brothers were to heed the Lucretian and Apollonian *consilium* to come to know themselves and their own *bona*, that is, the treasures they each had inside, they, like Lucretius (and Petrarch), would not be *fortunati* but potential *felices*.

Conclusion

The *De otio* is no laudatory work. Through it, Petrarch challenges the Carthusian definition of *otium*, *religio* and *felicitas*, in a word, the *ubi consistam* question in the Christian search for God. Petrarch does not want to enter the Carthusian cloister at all. He, rather, wants to renew the Carthusian position in the light of classical and early Christian learning methods and practices. Seeing that the Carthusians are likened to insipient beasts of burden on which death feeds and through which the devil does his work more easily, in the monastic metaphor of the hive, the Carthusians are more like parasitic drones than the busy bees of the Lord.

Seeing that, after all, Petrarch cares for his brother, he offers the *De otio* as a gentle learning experience intended (like *Hortensius* for St Augustine) to engender a love for philosophy and philology in their idle minds. Classical Hades and Petrarch's Lucretian-style analysis of it become, respectively, the perfect metaphor

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[447] I refer to the modernist imitations of Dante as discussed in Pike, 1997, p.98-133 *et passim*.

[448] *De otio*, p.780, "supremum vite diem expectandum censeant ut quis dici felix queat" cf. Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.*, I 10, 1100*a*, 32-4; *De otio*, p.780 "mortalium erumnas"; *ibid.*, p.782, "sed animalium prorsus errantium et quam longissime ab ea ipsa quam querimus felicitate distantium"; *ibid.*, "nisi se beatos dicere quos miseros sciat"; *ibid.*, pp.782-784; *De otio*, p.784, cf. *Nat. Hist.*, VII, 46, 151.

and means for a re-appraisal of accepted conventions. As an example of mediaeval teaching method, the *De otio religioso* thus goes hand in glove with the sub-group of *Familiares* analysed in the fourth chapter.

Chapter Two

The contrast Francesco-Gherardo in Salimbene

Fraternal contrast in literary contexts was not, however, new in Petrarch's time. It derived, rather, as I mentioned above in the Introduction,[449] from precise classical and biblical traditions. We might say that such opposition was archetypal to humanity. Contrast specifically between a 'Francesco' and a 'Gherardo' was also not new. I am referring to the *Cronica* written by the Franciscan friar, Salimbene Adam da Parma.[450] In order to fully explain the Dolcinian heresy, Salimbene establishes an explicit opposition between St Francis of Assisi and the "Apostolic Brother" Gherardo Segalelli. This is obviously not the place for a full discussion of Salimbene's *Cronica*, especially given the fact that that there is no evidence to prove that Petrarch had any knowledge whatsoever of the *Cronica.* The contrast, however, between St Francis of Assisi and Gherardo Segalelli, that is, between a Francesco and a Gherardo, as Salimbene describes it, presents several analogies with the contrast between Francesco and Gherardo Petracchi. In Salimbene, as it is in Petrarch, the opposition between a Francesco and a Gherardo was based on the question of how one should live one's religiosity, especially concerning work and learning. As I have pointed out elsewhere regarding Petrarch's Franciscanism,[451] these same topics characterised the first few decades of the fourteenth century. As such, they, and, perhaps, the opposition Francesco-Gherardo, were a sign of the times.

Whereas St Francis broke away from the traditional concept of religious life, keeping, however, within the confines of orthodoxy, Gherardo Segalelli, under the suggestion of the Joachimitic prophecies announcing the year 1260 as the beginning

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[449] See pp.2-3.
[450] Salimbene's *Cronica* is contained in the autographed (or perhaps ideographed) ms. Bibl. Vat., ms. Vat. Lat. 7260.

of the new age of the Spirit, became a heretic who would roam the streets crying out "Penitençágite!". This heretical Gherardo would teach his numerous followers not to respect the authority of priests, the celebration of mass or confession. Whereas St Francis and his followers would virtuously live in absolute poverty on the alms they received for their manual labour, Segalelli and his followers, called the "Apostolici", would lie about *ociosi* (sic) passing on their few services and the money they had stolen not to the poor but to blasphemous *ribaldi*.[452] It is, in fact, on the question of manual labour that the opposition between St Francis and the pseudo-Franciscan, Segalelli, is most emphasised. Salimbene insists on this concept with expressions such as, "Veruntamen hoc habebant, quia tota die discurrebant per civitatem mulieres videndo, reliquum tempus expendebant in ocio et nichil operabantur",[453] and, "Quales sunt isti, qui se dicunt Apostolos esse et tota die ociosi, tota die vagabundi per civitates et per mundum discurrunt nec operari volunt, sed vivere ex aliorum sudore et labore".[454] Salimbene sees Gherardo Segalelli as ignorant and stupid, and thus calls him a "ioculator fatuus et insensatus".[455] Indeed, his "Apostoli", because of their *stultitia*, "acephali sunt, id est sine capite".[456] They are also "illitterati et ydiote".[457] Here, Salimbene seems to be writing in that strong Franciscan vein which still respected St Francis's *Testamentum*, (which Gregory

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[451] Lokaj, 2000f.

[452] Salimbene de Adam, *Cronica*, (ed. Scalia, 1966, p.369) vol I, [ms. f. 316 v], "Illam etiam congregationem illorum **ribaldorum** et porcariorum et stultorum et ignobilium qui se dicunt Apostolos esse et non sunt, sed sunt synagoga Sathane, omnino destruxit. Ipsi enim non erant de semine virorum illorum per quos facta est salus in Israel, I Macha. V. Quia nec utiles sunt ad predicandum nec ad ecclesiasticum officium decantandum nec ad missas celebrandas nec ad confessiones audiendas nec ad legendum in scolis nec ad consilia danda nec etiam pro benefactoribus exorandum, quia tota die per civitates discurrunt mulieres videndo. Ad quid ergo Ecclesie Dei deserviant et populo Christiano utiles sint, videre non possum. **Tota die ociosi**, tota die vagabundi. Nam non laborant neque orant. Istorum principium fuit in Parma. Cum enim in Ordine fratrum Minorum habitarem in Parmensi conventu sacerdos et predicator existens, venit quidam iuvenis natione Parmensis, de vili progenie ortus, illitteratus et laycus, ydiota et stultus, cui nomen Gerardinus Segalellus".

[453] *ibid.* [ms. f. 318 r], p.374.

[454] *ibid.* [ms. f. 318 r], p.374; *ibid.* [ms. f. 320 r & v], p.382.

[455] *ibid.* [ms. f. 321 r], p.384.

[456] *ibid.* [ms. f. 323 v], p.393.

IX's bull of 1230, *Quo elongati*, had made not binding for the Franciscan Order, especially conerning manual labour and possessions).[458] In this *Testamentum*, St Francis had shown that he wanted to live a *vita vere apostolica* by both manually working and preaching. St Francis, therefore, was thoroughly in line with not only the Benedictine motto, "ora et labora", but also the precepts regarding *otium* I pointed out in the chapter on the *De otio*, that is, "Otiositas inimica est animae".[459] St Francis dictated (*Test.*, 20-22, ed. Esser, 1978, pp.310-311):

> Et ego **manibus meis laborabam**, et volo laborare; et omnes alii fratres firmiter volo, quod laborent de laboritio, quod pertinet ad honestatem. **Qui nesciunt, discant**, non propter cupiditatem recipiendi pretium laboris, sed propter exemplum et **ad repellendam otiositatem**.

Seeing that Gherardo Segalelli and his "Apostoli" do not work and do not study, for Salimbene, they confirm the line in Job 28, "Sapientia non invenitur in terra suaviter viventium."[460] Indeed, because of this opposition to St Francis, that is, because of their aversion to work, their incapability of, or lack of desire to, study, and their arrogant claim to be the new Apostles of Christ, Salimbene refers to them as 'part of the synagogue of Satan'. They are not the disciples of Christ, but of the Antichrist. They are even 'harbingers of the Antichrist'.[461] It was this Gherardo who, in Trento or Parma, was to inspire fra' Dolcino to impose poverty on the wealthy clergy by burning their property and murdering them.

The analogies between Salimbene's Francesco and Gherardo, on the one hand, and Petrarch's Francesco and Gherardo, on the other, are the following. Like Gherardo Segalelli and his Apostoli:

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[457] *ibid.* [ms. f. 329 r], p.414.
[458] See *Quo elongati*, in *Bullarii Franciscani Epitome*, ed. C. Eubel, no. iv, p.229a, cit. in Lambert, p.21. see also Lambert, pp.7-79, 82-84.
[459] *Reg.*, 192, *P.L.*, 103, 550, cit. also in Leclercq, 1963, p. 41.
[460] *ibid.* [ms. f. 324 v], p.397.
[461] *ibid.* [ms. f. 318 v], p.374, "se dicunt Apostolos esse et non sunt, sed sunt synagoga Sathane, congregatio stultorum et ignobilium et representatio discipulorum antichristi" & *ibid.* [ms. f. 414 r] p.713, "[...] prenuntii Antichristi, quorum principium in Ghirardino Segalello fuit".

1. Gherardo Petracchi and his fellow brethren do not cultivate *studium*;
2. The Carthusians are illiterate *ociosi* who do not preach and do not work. They prefer, instead, despite their *regula*, to live off the manual work of others.

Furthermore, Salimbene's use of "ribaldi" and the anti-Judaic term "synagoga Sathane" to allude to an arrogant and out-moded way of cultivating religiosity is analogous to Petrarch's disparaging use throughout the *De otio* and the *Familiares* of the abstract noun *Cartusia*. Both the Apostolici and the Carthusians are, therefore, like the parasitic *fuci* mentioned in the chapter on the *De otio.* They are the insipient drones which, *ignavi ad portas*, are destined to be killed. Indeed, despite the tenuous connection between Salimbene and Petrarch, the common pattern emerging fits in perfectly with the classical and biblical models mentioned in the Introduction. That is, whereas St Francis and Francesco Petrarch went on to become, respectively, the revolutionary saint and revolutionary poet we know today, Gherardo Segalelli was eventually burnt at the stake as a heretic and Gherardo is relegated to an obscure existence and future death in Montrieux.[462] In other words, the Francesco of both accounts triumphs and the Gherardo of both accounts is somehow killed.

Chapter Three

Mary Magdalene: a "Franciscan" muse inspiring Petrarch?

It has been suggested that Laura was for Petrarch what Mary Magdalene was for Christ. Duperray advanced the hypothesis that both women share a number of traits in common in Petrarch's description of them that do not seem to be coincidental. These traits concern their physical beauty and their roles in his narrative of love. Based on her understanding of Mary Magdalene's role in Petrarch's Latin works, Duperray believes that Mary Magdalene influenced the writing of Petrarch's *Canzoniere* inasmuch as the saint also constituted a beautiful, female model of conversion.[463]

Despite the fact that Mary Magdalene is explicitly mentioned only once in the entire *Canzoniere*,[464] in my view, Duperray's reasoning is plausible. Mary Magdalene, after all, answered a real social need in the Later Middle Ages for a model which demonstrated that even the greatest of sinners could find redemption and eventually reach heaven.[465] I feel, however, that Duperray has misinterpreted Mary Magdalene's role in Petrarch's Latin works. Duperray followed the position of earlier scholars, such as Cochin, who had seen St Mary Magdalene as a model for the conversion of Gherardo, Petrarch's brother, and his subsequent entry into the Carthusian order in 1342.[466] On the basis of Constable's discussion, which I outlined in the Introduction,[467] of Mary and Martha as *figurae*, that is as symbols of contemplative and active life respectively, even for a pair of brothers, in this short chapter I shall present my own findings concerning Mary Magdalene amd Petrarch.

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462 We do not even know the precise year of Gherardo's death.
463 Duperray, 1989, pp.273, 282-286.
464 *RVF*, 95, 12-13, "Lasso, non a Maria, non nocque a Pietro/ la fede, ch'a me sol tanto è nemica".
465 Haskins, 1994, p.228.
466 Cochin, 1975, p.179.
467 See nn.8, 9 & 18.

I re-address her importance as a role model of conversion not so much for Gherardo the monk as for Petrarch the sinning poet of God.

Like St James, whose body had miraculously ended up in Spain, many different mediaeval legends spoke about Mary Magdalene's life after Christ's death, including her supposed arrival in France. The *Liber Sancti Jacobi*, in fact, mentions that Mary Magdalene's body was to be venerated in the basilica of Vézelay in Burgundy. She who had washed the Saviour's feet with her own hair and tears had supposedly come to France with Saint Maximinus. Via contamination with the life of Mary of Egypt, translated into Latin by Paulus Diaconus and Anastasius the Librarian in the ninth century, but erroneously believed to have been written by the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, it was thought that Mary Magdalene had also withdrawn from active life to spend thirty years of penance in a solitary cave. In the twelfth century this cave was identified with one in Provence called the Sainte-Baume,[468] a toponym etymologised with 'Holy Balm'.[469] This cave was immediately included as a major attraction on the pilgrimage route from Italy to Compostela.[470] In Provence, the other two main centres dedicated to Mary Magdalene were Aix-en-Provence and St-Maximin.[471]

Magdalenic devotion spread rapidly throughout Europe, especially thanks to the consequences of the 1146 and 1190 crusades. Pilgrimage to Vézelay in Burgundy rapidly became a lucrative affair for the Burgundians. In order to compete for the economic benefits to be had from such pilgrimage, Charles of Salerno, the future Charles II d'Anjou, king of Naples and count of Provence from 1285, claims to have found the mortal remains of Mary Magdalene in the crypt of the church of St-Maximin. This Angevin and exquisitely Provençal *inventio*

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[468] Celletti, 1967, p.1092.
[469] Haskins, 1994, p.120.
[470] Caucci, 1984, pp. 48-49.

provoked even greater fervour around the figure of Mary Magdalene, with focal points in the Sainte-Baume and the church of St-Maximin.[472] We shall see in the following *Familiares* just how important these topographical and political factors were to become for Petrarch.

That Mary Magdalene held a special place in Angevin hagiographical devotion, especially in combination with the well-documented Angevin sponsorship of Franciscanism, is demonstrated by the fresco work in the Franciscan Church of San Lorenzo Maggiore in Naples. Reconstruction of this church was carried out between 1266 and 1285 by Charles I d'Anjou over the sixth-century basilica by the same name. Charles I is said to have dedicated so much time and energy to the re-building of San Lorenzo for the Franciscans of Naples, especially in its magnificent French Gothic-style apse and the more austere Franciscan-style nave and transept, as a memorial to his victory over Manfredi in Benevento on 26 February, 1266.[473] The devout Charles II, together with his even more devout wife, Mary of Hungary, who was also particularly devoted to the Franciscans, inherited his father's devotional politics and contributed even more handsomely to the rebuilding of San Lorenzo. King Robert, his heir to the throne, favoured the Franciscans above all and completed the church of San Lorenzo Maggiore in 1324.[474] It was in this church that Giovanni Boccaccio supposedly first saw and fell in love with Fiammetta. It was here that internationally famous artists worked, such as Simone Martini, Colantonio and possibly even Giotto. Giovanni Barrili, whom Petrarch was to meet in 1341 while in Naples for his pre-coronation examination by King Robert, had a cycle of

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[471] Celletti, 1967, p.1089. For the cult of the Magdaleine in this area, see also Saxer 1959, p.204.
[472] Celletti, 1967 pp. 1090-1091. On this *inventio* which occurred on 9 Dec. 1279, see also Saxer, pp. 263-265.
[473] Fino, 1987, p.92.
[474] On the Angevin devotion to St Francis and the Franciscan movement, see Fino, 1987, pp.7-14, 18, and Lokaj, 2000d.

frescoes executed by a young painter working in the style of Giotto around 1329.[475] According to the *Annales Minorum*,[476] it was here that Petrarch stayed during the terrible storm which raged on 25 November 1343. Petrarch describes this Franciscan convent as a true haven inhabited by "religiosi viri" guided by a "sanctissimus prior" by the name of David.[477] This church also contains the tombs of famous political and intellectual leaders, such as the tombs of Catherine of Austria (1323), of Charles of Durazzo (1348) and of Ludovico Caracciolo (1335), the Franciscan Provincial Minister and former student of John Duns Scotus in Paris. Caracciolo was also the probable founder of the Scotist chair at the University of Naples.[478] This church, therefore, enjoyed the favour of the elite which Petrarch knew and respected. It is in the first chapel of the French-style deambulatory that a series of frescoes depicting stories from the life of Mary Magdalene can be admired. The artist, who would seem to be an assistant of Memmo di Filippuccio, that is, of the only one of Giotto's helpers actually recorded for the decoration of the Upper Basilica of St Francis in Assisi, executed this fine work between 1295 and 1300ca.[479] In a word, San Lorenzo Maggiore in Naples seems to be the link between Angevin devotion to Mary Magdalene in Provence, Angevin Franciscanism and Petrarch.

Literary sources such as *Vitae sanctorum* and chronicles also played their role in influencing Petrarch. Mary Magdalene was given a special mention, for example, in the *Legenda aurea* by Jacopo da Varagine (1264-1267) and the *Speculum historiale* by Vincent de Beauvais (1244-1253ca.).[480] Particularly

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[475] Fino, 1987, p.92-93.
[476] *Ann. Min., ad annum* 1356, 124 II, p.145.
[477] *Fam.*, V 5, 8.
[478] Fino, 1987, p.14.
[479] *ibid.*, pp.97.
[480] See also the chronicles by Tolomeo di Lucca, Bernardo Guidone and Amalrico Ogerio. Cf. Celletti, 1967, p.1098.

important for our study of Petrarch's relationship with Mary Magdalene is the fact that, prompted by the Angevin *inventio* of the mortal remains of the saint in St-Maximin, a Franciscan friar, Salimbene de Adam, also included the event in his *Cronica*. In this history of the Franciscan movement, which I have already mentioned in Chapter Two in the light of the dichotomy between the two Franciscans, Francesco of Assisi and Gherardo Segalelli, Salimbene explains the intimate relationship between the cult of the Magdalene and early Franciscanism. This, in turn, might also help us understand this same relationship as it will be later in Angevin Naples. Salimbene writes (*Cron.* ad ann. 1283 [426b-d], p.762, Scalia):

> DE SPELUNCA IN QUA SANCTA MARIA MAGDALENA XXX ANNIS HOMINIBUS INCOGNITA MANSIT. Spelunca vero sancte Marie Magdalene, in qua XXX annis penitentiam fecit, per XV miliaria a Massilia distat. Et in illa una nocte dormivi immediate post festum ipsius[481]. Et est in altissimo monte saxoso, adeo grandis secundum meum iuditium, si bene recordor, quod mille homines caperet; et sunt ibi altaria tria et stillicidium aque ad modum fontis Siloe et via pulcherrima ad eundum, et exterius quedam ecclesia prope speluncam, ubi quidam sacerdos inhabitat; et supra speluncam tanta adhuc est altitudo montis, quanta baptisperii Parmensis altitudo conspicitur. Et spelunca in illo monte ita elevata est a planitie terre, quod tres turres Asinellorum de Bonomia secundum meum iuditium, si bene recordor, illuc attingere non possent, ita quod arbores grandes que inferius sunt apparent urtice seu salvie caspi.[482] Et quia regio illa sive contrata adhuc est tota inhabitabilis et deserta, ideo mulieres et nobiles domine de Massilia, cum illuc causa devotionis vadunt, ducunt secum asinos oneratos pane et vino et turtis et piscibus et comestibilibus aliis, quibus volunt. Verum in eadem via ad v miliaria prope speluncam est quoddam nobile monasterium Dominarum Albarum multarum, que fratres minores intime diligunt et libenter recipiunt et vident, sedule ministrando et bonum hospitium eis dando.

Salimbene's account is not without certain exaggeration and entertaining references to his old Italian haunts. Just as the cave at the Sainte-Baume, though large, could

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[481] Her Feast Day is presented as 22 July.
[482] The term "caspi" might be better emended with *cespi* = *caespi* = *caespites*.

hardly contain "a thousand men", so too is it absurd to compare it to the famous baptistery in Parma and the Tower of the Asinelli in Bologna. The main point we must glean, however, is Salimbene's attempt to appropriate the cave in some way to the Franciscan Order. He himself claims to have slept there one night. He, therefore, claims to know the area which, as he correctly describes, is very sparsely populated. It is exactly here, however, that there is an obvious omission or substitution. That is to say, Salimbene writes that the "nobile monasterium Dominarum Albarum" is five miles away from the cave of the Sainte-Baume. He does not mention at all the Charterhouse of Montrieux, which, to my knowledge, is the closest man-made structure to the cave of the Magdalene and exactly five miles away from it. The only "noble monastery" close by housing certain "Dominae Albae" is recorded in Salimbene's *Cronica*, but much farther away in Hyères. The distance is almost exactly double, that is, ten miles. Moreover, compared to the Sainte-Baume, Hyères is in exactly the same direction as Montrieux.[483] It is these "White Ladies" who love the Franciscan Friars Minor so much that they willingly take them in "offering fine hospitality".[484]

Why does Salimbene place the "nobile monasterium" of the White Ladies exactly where the Chartreuse de Montrieux-le-Jeune stands? It would seem that Salimbene knowingly substitutes the Carthusians with the White Ladies who are, in turn, devoted to Franciscanism.[485] The aim of the account would seem, therefore, to exclude the Carthusians from the cult of the Mary Magdalene and create, instead, an

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[483] Salimbene, *Cron.*, (Vat. Lat. MS, 7260, cod. f. 316c ad annum 1248 = p. 568 Scalia (1st. ed.)), "Esta autem Manara quedam contrata iuxta supradictum castrum [that is, the *castrum* of Atra, now called Hières in Provence, "ubi iuxta mare fit sal"] in quo erat monasterium dominarum Albarum, que devote fratrum minorum erant et sunt usque in hodiernum dieme magis et magis".

[484] In a passage on a mendicant movement called 'the Saccati', Salimbene (*Cron.*, ad ann. 1274, Scalia) also mentions the *Dominae Albae* as being devoted to the Franciscans.

[485] In fact, Saxer (pp.205, 207) explains that the *Dominae Albae* of whom Salimbene speaks are "religieuses pénitentes de la Madeleine" probably connected to the confessional of St Lazarus in Marseilles.

intimate connection between the early Franciscan movement and the female saint in the renewed devotional atmosphere created by the Angevins in Provence.

Even though Petrarch too claims to have slept in the cave, we cannot be sure, as I pointed out in the introduction, that Petrarch had actually read Salimbene. It is more prudent to insert Petrarch in a long line of *compilatores* who had written about her. I am referring to a letter to Philippe de Cabassoles, written in 1371, in which Petrarch writes that he had been asked some thirty-four years beforehand by his cardinal friend, Giovanni Colonna, to accompany the dauphin of France, Humbert, to the cave at the Sainte-Baume.[486] The choice of addressee is also indicative of this line of *compilatores* inasmuch as Philippe himself had also written a small book, the *Libellus historialis Mariae Beatissimae Magdalenae*, on the life of the saint, the *inventio* of her body in St-Maximin and some of the miracles she had operated.[487] Most importantly, Philippe de Cabassoles was also Franciscan or would, in time, become one. The *Annales Minorum* describe him as the "brachium dextrum et columna fortissima" of the Franciscan Order of which he was to become Cardinal Protector in 1369.[488] It was to a Franciscan devotee of the saint,[489] therefore, that Petrarch writes the letter about Mary Magdalene which, as we shall see, is not devoid of literary artifice.

It is 1338. Prince Humbert turns out to be too melancholic for Petrarch's tastes, so the poet spends three days and three nights in and around the cave on his own, wandering through the forest. The first absent friend to come to mind is Philippe de Cabassoles, bishop of Cavaillon and, therefore, the utmost ecclesiastical authority over Petrarch who had just bought a house on the Sorgue in Vaucluse (ecclesiastically under Cavaillon) the year before (1337). In the cave at the Sainte-

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[486] *Sen.*, XIV 15.
[487] *Libellus historialis Mariae Beatissimae Magdalenae*, ms. lat. N° 17558 Bibl. Nat. Paris.
[488] *Ann. Min.*, *ad annum* 1369, 215 IX, p.253; *Ann. Min.*, *ad annum* 1372, 267 XXXVII, p.313.

Baume, Petrarch imagines that Philippe urges him to say something in honour of St Mary Magdalene.[490] There and then Petrarch writes a short Latin poem on the saint, the *Carmen de Beata Maria Magdalena.*[491]

Petrarch's poem is composed of thirty-six lines. The number, therefore, contains a numerological allusion to the Trinity (3) and to Laura (6). It may also allude to Petrarch's *Canzoniere*, composed of 366 poems describing his changing relationship with Laura. The number might also allude to the number of years Mary Magdalene spent in penance. That is to say, even though the official accounts of the saint's life all mention thirty years, Petrarch writes, instead, that perhaps she spent even *more* than thirty years.[492] The liberty Petrarch takes in re-presenting the official version of the saint's life might, indeed, be a conscious decision to create a parallel between the saint and Laura via the number thirty-six.

In the *Carmen* on Mary Magdalene, *Dulcis amica Dei*, Petrarch describes the saint as the one who had touched and bathed Christ's feet with her "sleek tresses", as the one who had clung "to His cross without shrinking from dire torments at Jewish hands and taunts and insults of the furious crowd", and the one to whom Christ first appeared after having risen from the dead.[493] In other words, Petrarch saw no difference between Mary Magdalene and the woman taken in adultery and destined to be stoned in John,[494] the woman "healed of evil spirits and

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[489] See Wilkins, 1960, p.70; See also Cochin, 1975, p.43.

[490] *Sen.*, XIV 15, "visus es [*scil.* Philippus] hortari ut breve aliquid dicerem illius sanctissime mulieris ad gloriam".

[491] For Mary Magdalene and Petrarch, see Wilkins, 1964, p.35; Dotti, 1992, p.52; The *Carmen de Beata Maria Magdalena* was not included in the fifteenth- sixteenth-century *Opera Francisci Petrarchi* edited in Basel. It was published for the first time in *Poëmata*, Rossetti, 1834, p.291. See also, "Le 'Carmen de Beata Maria Magdalena' de Petrarque" in Pinto-Mathieu, 1997, pp.182-186.

[492] *Sen.*, XIV 15, "rogas, inquam, ut versiculos aliquot, quos olim in spelunca illa devotissima dictavi, ubi, ut ferunt, felix illa peccatrix Maria Magdalena triginta, *vel et amplius annis* penitentiam suam egit".

[493] *Poëmata*, vol.III, appendix II, pp.2-25. The English translation of the excerpts from the *Carmen de Maria Magdalena* are taken from *Sen.*, XIV,15 in Bernardo, 1992, pp.597-598.

[494] *Io.*, 8:3-11.

infirmities" in Luke,[495] the woman who had touched Christ and whose "faith hath made [...] whole" in Luke[496], the Mary Magdalene who had stayed at the foot of the cross after the male apostles had fled in Mark[497] and Matthew,[498] and the woman who washed Christ's feet with her tears in Luke.[499]

Such confusion concerning the identity of these women was not, however, peculiar only to Petrarch. It went back to the third century AD and had found authorisation in Pope Gregory the Great (540 ca.-604) who had settled the question by declaring that Mary Magdalene, Mary of Bethany (Lazarus' sister) and the sinner in Luke were one and the same.[500] The confusion in Petrarch's short poem was, therefore, authorised by the last great Father of the Western Church.

What is not altogether authorised is the dating of the poem. Whereas the rapidity with which Petrarch supposedly composed the poem is perhaps plausible, the dating is definitely suspect. Why wait thirty-four years before sending the poem to Philippe? Why did Petrarch choose not to give it to him when he saw him, as he writes in the same letter, upon his return from the Sainte-Baume in 1338? Petrarch's immediate ecclesiastical superior and friend would only have been too happy to receive a poem by the already famous Petrarch on his favourite saint while he was still in Cavaillon, rather than in the Sabina some thirty-four years later. The doubts arise because of the similarities with the rapidity with which Petrarch had supposedly composed another letter in the same period - the *Familiaris* IV 1 describing his climb of Mt Ventoux. The *Familiaris* IV 1 is dated 1336. As we shall see in the chapter on the *Familiares* regarding Gherardo, critics have established,

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[495] *Lc.*, 8:2-3.
[496] *ibid.*, 8:48.
[497] *Mc.*, 14:50.
[498] *Mt.*, 9:20-2.
[499] *Lc.*, 7:36-9.
[500] Haskins, 1993, p.16.

however, that it was not composed until the early 1350's.[501] Twenty years had passed since Petrarch had supposedly written it down "raptim et ex tempore"[502] in the tiny country inn at the foot of the mountain. Analogously, Petrarch claims in the *Senilis* XIV 15 to Philippe that at the Sainte-Baume, he had composed the *Carmen* on the Magdalene, "raptim et ex tempore". Furthermore, in both the Mt Ventoux letter and the letter to Philippe, Petrarch feigns that the respective compositions had remained unaltered and, therefore, that they faithfully reflected his soul as it was then. There are, however, many other lexical and structural similarities between the *Familiaris* IV 1 and the *Senilis* XIV 15. They are the following:

Fam., "Malausanam venimus **ad vesperam**; [...] Illic **unum diem morati**, **hodie** tandem [...] montem ascendimus"[503]
Sen., "in illo igitur sacro, sed horrendo specu **tres dies**, et **totidem noctes**"

Fam., "Sic sepe delusus quadam **in valle consedi**"[504]
Sen., "Cum ergo **specus in parte consedissemus**"

Fam., "Illic **a corporeis ad incorporea** volucri **cogitatione** transiliens"[505]
Sen., "fingendi scilicet animo **presentiam absentium** amicorum, et **averso a presentibus cogitatu**, cum absentibus colloquendi"

Fam., (interior **dialogue** with himself) "**expertus es**"[506]
Sen., ('external' **dialogue** with an imaginary Philippe) "**visus es**"

Fam., (then **'external' dialogue** with imaginary Dionigi) "**visus est michi** *Confessionum* Augustini librum inspicere [...] Deum testor ipsumque qui **aderat**"[507]
Sen., "Hec paranti **tu michi** primus **affueras**"

Fam., "id scito et tibi accidere et multis, accedentibus **ad beatam vitam**; sed idcirco tam facile ab **hominibus** non perpendi"[508]
Sen., "quo ut sunt mentes **hominum** piorum **ad omnem devotionem** prone"

Fam., "hec tibi, **raptim et ex tempore**, scripturus; ne, **si distulissem**, pro varietate locorum mutatis forsan affectibus, scribendi propositum de**ferveret**. **Vide**"[509]

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[501] Billanovich, 1947, pp.193-198; Billanovich, 1966, pp.397-399; O'Connell, 1983, p.507; Robbins, 1985, pp.533-553.
[502] *Fam.*, IV 1, 35.
[503] *ibid.*, 6.
[504] *ibid.*, 12.
[505] *ibid.*
[506] *ibid.*
[507] *ibid.*, 26-27.
[508] *ibid.*, 12.

Sen., "Feci autem **raptim, et ex tempore**, ut qui nulla penitus tunc in re moram pati possem **fervidus**, audaxque inventa, ut Maro ait. **Nam si esses fortassis oblitus**, libenter enim obliviscimur tediorum, curarumque prementium, quartus et trigesimus annus est, ex quo acta sunt hec (**vide**"

Fam., "ad unum, bonum, verum, certum stabile **se convertat**"[510]
Sen., "ad usitatum solatium me **converti**"

The structural similarities listed above with the Mt Ventoux letter would seem to indicate an insistence upon the three-day scheme reminiscent of Christ's Passion. As I shall point out better in the chapter on the *Familiares*, the "certain valley" in which Petrarch "sits down" on the slope of Mt Ventoux is the *locus amoenus* already alluded to in the chapter on the *De otio* as Vaucluse. This is where his real conversion takes place. Petrarch alludes to such conversion in both the *Senilis* XIV 15 and the *Familiaris* IV 1 with the verb *converti*. The analogous "sitting down" in the cave of the Magdalene would, therefore, invite an interpretation of the cave in a similar light, that is, as a place of conversion. It is here, in fact, that Petrarch's thoughts go from the concrete to the abstract. It is here that an imaginary second interlocutor appears. Such conversion is both specific (concerning Petrarch only) and generic (for humanity), hence the immediate generalisation to all men. Petrarch's relationship with Mary Magdalene is part of his *exemplaritas*. In other words, if he can convert and be saved thanks to the saint, then so too can the rest of humanity.

In conclusion, the *modus componendi* of both the *Familiaris* IV 1 and the *Senilis* XIV 15 would seem to be the same, where Petrarch feigns to have written them on the spur of the moment so as not to have the "fervour" changed by the course of future events. The common structural and lexical features of the two letters would seem to suggest that, as for the Mt Ventoux letter written some twenty years later than the feigned date of composition, we should also date the poem on St

[509] *ibid.*, 35-36.

Mary Magdalene much later. I would suggest a date of composition around the time of the same 1371 letter to Philippe. A later dating would mean that Petrarch did not have to look for the torn and crumpled up poem under piles of other dust-laden works, as he writes in the letter to Philippe.[511] A later dating would imply, instead, that Petrarch, just two or three years before his death in 1374, wanted to establish a devotional connection with the saint which went back to his adolescent years: "non quid sum, sed quid eram" (that is, when Philippe was a Cardinal Protector and powerful enough to help not only the Franciscans, but also Petrarch).

The later dating in turn begs the questions:- why, after so many years, did Petrarch decide to see his visit to the Sainte-Baume in this new light? Why did he use the Mt Ventoux letter as a model for the *Senilis* to Philippe? If he did this, what is the connection between the Magdalene and Gherardo? Why, in this letter to Philippe, does the old Petrarch use the term "scripture" for his writings, rather than the more usual *scripta* or *nuge*? Is his writing about Mary Magdalene somehow intended to invite us to see his entire literary production as comparable to the Holy Scriptures?

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Cochin hypothesised that Petrarch's devotion to Mary Magdalene ought to seen in connection with Gherardo's entrance into the Carthusian order. Indeed, Cochin believed that the devotion to Mary Magdalene played a certain role in the legendary and historical origins of the Chartreuse of Montrieux, where Gherardo lived as a Carthusian

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[510] *ibid.*, 36.

[511] *Sen.*, XIV 15, "hos tibi versiculos incorrectos legi, qui tuo et meo nomine scripti erant, ut quos te imaginario teste atque hortatore dictaveram, dehinc eos inter scripturarum mearum cumulos abieci, nec eorum amplius recordatus sum, tu nunc illos petis, quos difficile fuit inter alia scripta, difficilius in mea memoria reperire. Ibi nempe perierant, nec penitus occurrebat tale aliquid me fecisse, tandem per inditia temporum, quibus in talibus uti soleo, cum labore et pulvere reinventi semilaceri, ut erant, et squalentes ad te veniunt, neque enim in eis aliquid muto, multa cum possim, quo scilicet non quid sum, sed quid eram videas, et cum voluptate quadam adolescentie nostre rudimenta memineris".

monk, and a capital role in the conversion of both Gherardo and Petrarch.[512] If this is true, why then does Petrarch have to remind his brother, in a letter written specifically to him, that his small Charterhouse stood near the Sainte-Baume? Petrarch writes:

> Antrum ubi solitarie degit Monicus, Mons Rivi est, ubi tu [Gherardo] nunc monasticam vitam agis inter speluncas et nemora, vel ipsum antrum in quo Maria Magdalena penitentiam egit, quod monasterio tuo vicinum est.[513]

Monicus is a name given to Gherardo by Petrarch in the first *Bucolicum Carmen* otherwise entitled "*Parthenias*" written in honour of Virgil. Much work still needs to be done on this collection of Latin poems, especially in the light of the real significance of the names Petrarch gives his characters ("Monicus" for his brother, "Silvius" for himself, etc).[514] It is safe to assume, however, that the cave in which this Monicus-alias-Gherardo lives is indeed the Carthusian order - the "durum limen" (hard threshold)[515] which Silvius-Petrarch will never be able to cross, as we shall see better in the following chapter.

Petrarch also sent and dedicated another work to Philippe de Cabassoles, the *De vita solitaria*. Petrarch claims in the 1371 letter sent to him that he had written this treatise ten years after his visit to the Sainte-Baume, therefore, around 1347-8. Let us remember that it was in 1347 that Petrarch made his first visit to Gherardo, who had already been a Carthusian monk in Montrieux for almost five years.[516] It is in the *De vita solitaria* that Petrarch concentrates on Mary Magdalene as the converted sinner. It is truly indicative to note that in the treatise *De vita solitaria*, not only is Gherardo *not* mentioned whatsoever, but neither is St Bruno, the founder

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[512] Cochin, 1975, pp.54 & 179, and Duperray, 1989, p.275.
[513] *Fam.*, X 4, 21.
[514] Cf. Brugnoli, 2000.
[515] *Buc. Carm.*, I 46.
[516] Cf. Lokaj, 1998, pp.33-39.

of the Carthusian Order. Furthermore, the only *locus* in which the Order itself is mentioned is in a catalogue of "sacra cenobia" nestling in forests. Petrarch writes:

> "Indicio nunc sunt sacra cenobia, et inter spelea silvestria devotissime domus Cristi: Cistertium, Maiella[517], Cartusia, Vallisumbrosa, Camaldulum, innumerabilesque alie: quarum religionum rivi, etc".[518]

Whatever the reasons for Petrarch's general ommission of the Carthusian Order in the *De vita solitaria*, except in the case above, it is interesting to notice that it is directly following this list of "sacra cenobia" that Petrarch begins his praising treatise on St Francis as the greatest authority and theoriser of solitude.[519] It would seem, therefore, that the Franciscan model surpasses those afforded by the "sacra cenobia" listed.

In the *De vita solitaria*, Petrarch finishes the long section dedicated to saints by exalting Mary Magdalene and praising Christ, the solitary (and yet active) person of the Bible *par excellence*. As a purely structural consideration, it is as if Mary Magdalene were second only to the Son of God.

Petrarch establishes an inverse parallel between St John the Baptist and Mary Magdalene.[520] Whereas John had first spent his life in a cave before announcing the Advent of the Lord, Mary Magdalene first of all lived with the Christ and then retired to a cave in Provence. Petrarch knew that Philippe de Cabassoles had been to the cave before.[521] He describes the place as awe-inspiring, adding that even those who live far away should go there. He calls the saint "the sweet, happy guest of Christ" who "did not have maids to serve her but the ministry

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[517] The Maiella, a rocky area of the Abruzzo Region in Italy, is where Pietro of Morrone, later Celestine V, founded the rigorous discipline of Benedictine-cum-Franciscan inspiration known as the "Penitent Brothers of the Holy Ghost", or the 'Celestines'. It was here that certain Spiritual Franciscans, such as Angelo Clareno and Pier de Jean Olieu, fled to find temporary safety after they had been excommunicated.

[518] Bufano, 1987, p.428.

[519] *ibid.*, pp.430-432. See also Lokaj, 2000f.

[520] Much of this paragraph is a paraphrase of Petrarch's *De vita sol.*, pp.478-480.

of angels". In comparing her to her more active sister, Martha, Petrarch stresses the contemplative life carried out by Mary. In so doing, not only does Petrarch continue in the above-mentioned[522] confusion between the various Marys mentioned in the New Testament, but, in the light of the Old Testament *figurae*, Leah and Rachel, he also underlines the connection between the contemplative life and the sinning Mary in Luke who was meant to be stoned to death. Petrarch even states that Christ, the highest, infallible judge, chose correctly, for Mary/contemplative life was indeed "the better part" (*optima pars*).[523] In John's account of the two sisters, Martha is the active one who goes to meet Jesus when he returns to Judæa to bring back Lazarus from the dead. Mary, instead, "sat still in the house".[524] It is Martha who doubts about Jesus' thaumaturgical powers to raise the dead when she says, "Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days". Jesus replied, "Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?"[525] In his *De vita solitaria*, it would seem that Petrarch is alluding to the fact that Mary's past life as a sinner had actually made her all the more the believer. Mary the ex-sinner, therefore, was worthy of greater holiness than her sister who had never sinned.

It is immediately following his discussion of Mary Magdalene, the solitary penitent, that Petrarch, who at this time is still living in the solitary woods of Vaucluse, establishes a parallel between the saint and himself and/or the common man. Petrarch writes, "No wonder that a sinner, surrounded by so many enemies, should want to flee towards the safe shadows."[526] Indeed, the main reason for Petrarch's initial move to Vaucluse in 1337, the year preceding his first visit to the

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[521] *ibid.*, p.478, "et pro domo habuit nudam et concavam illam rupem, quam vidisse te arbitror".
[522] See p.123, n.500.
[523] *De vita sol.*, p.480, "Iure igitur, ab illo summo et infallibili rerum extimatore, de optime partis electione laudata est".
[524] *Io.*, 11:20.
[525] *ibid.*, 11:39-40.
[526] *De vita sol.* II x, "Quis ergo miretur si peccator, tot circumsessus ab hostibus, tutas cupide fugit in latebras".

Sainte-Baume, was his "peregrinationes rusticationesque".[527] Petrarch has seen his own life already implicitly modelled on that of Mary Magdalene.

Furthermore, the model suggested by Mary Magdalene actually *introduces* the common sinner to the life of Christ. That is to say, Petrarch's reflections on Mary Magdalene bring him to remind his reader that Christ had often drawn himself away from his Apostles to pray on his own. This had occurred both in the desert and, even more often, on a mountain (was Petrarch already thinking of the equation, Mt Tabor = Mt Ventoux?). Any connection with Gherardo was purely coincidental. Among the models of solitude in *De vita solitaria*, as we saw above,[528] Gherardo and the monastic orders based in some fashion on the Benedictine rule, are absent. Franciscanism, instead, connected as it is in many ways with the Magdalene, provides the answer. It seems possible to conclude that, in Petrarch's *De vita solitaria*, the Carthusian order and, therefore, Gherardo are not considered as models to follow for Petrarchan-style conversion. Mary Magdalene, on the other hand, together with St Francis, are, instead, presented as sublime models for any sinner who, through real active solitude, wants to follow Christ.

In his *Epistola familiaris* III 12 sent to Marco Portonario of Genoa, Petrarch emphasises the contrast between the two sisters of the New Testament. "actuosa Marthe solicitudo non spernitur, quamvis sublimior contemplatio sit Marie".[529] Years before, Marco had told Petrarch of his decision to embrace the monastic life. He now informs Petrarch that he wants to remain in the political arena. Petrarch tells him that this does not preclude a contemplative life at all. There is time for a purely contemplative life afterwards. "Quam multi viri clarissimi magna cum gloria

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[527] *Secr.* III, Bufano, 1987, p.204.
[528] See p. 128, nn. 517-518.
[529] *Fam.*, III 12, 8.

per rei publice tempestates ad heremitici portus silentium pervenerunt".[530] Indeed, it would be much better for him to reach a more mature age before embracing the purely contemplative life because now such a change brought about by the eagerness of youth would be too sudden.[531] Furthermore, it is in the later, more modest years of life, when the passions have subsided and the highwaymen have been banished, that one may travel more safely along the road towards salvation.[532]

Alternatively, Marco could combine the active and contemplative lives at the same time. To explain his point, Petrarch quotes the section in Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis* in which Africanus tells his grandson about the glorious destiny of those who have served the state well.[533] Petrarch strengthens his argument by quoting the principal proponent of ancient neo-Platonism, the third century AD philosopher, Plotinus.[534] This philosopher stated that it is not only through expiation and penance, but also through political virtues that one can reach a state of bliss.[535] Petrarch would seem to be asserting that a life, which is both active and contemplative, is far better than one that is exclusively contemplative. Furthermore, there is time for contemplation when one grows old. Youth is best used in an active sense while cultivating virtue.[536] Inasmuch as Marco does not "suddenly convert" and give up an active life while still young, he demonstrates that he has heeded Petrarch's advice. Gherardo has done exactly the opposite. We can thus infer from

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[530] *ibid.*, 4; cf. Dante's description of Guido da Montefeltro in *If.* 27.

[531] *Fam.*, III 12, 7, "securius etate integra maturoque consilio, quam si id inconsulto repentinoque impetu iuveniliter attentasses".

[532] *ibid.*, 8, "Sicut enim per terram latrunculis vacuam atque purgatam, per planum ac solidum callem sub tranquilla celi temperie tutum viatori iter est, sic sedatis passionibus firmatoque proposito et primeve insolentie tumore compresso, per modestiores atque sereniores etatis annos tutissime pergitur ad salutem."

[533] *ibid.*, 6; Cic., *rep.*, 6, 13, "Omnibus qui patriam conservaverint auxerint adiuverint, certum esse in caelo diffinitum locum, ubi beati aevo sempiterno fruantur [...] Nichil enim est [...] principi illi deo qui omnem hunc mondum regit, quod quidem fiat in terris acceptius quam concilia coetusque hominum iure sociati, quae civitates appellantur". Cf. *Fam.*, III 12, 6.

[534] Plot., *Enn.*, 1, 2, 1-2, transmitted by Macr., *somn.*, 1, 8, 5-6.

[535] *Fam.*, III 12,8, "iuxta Plotini sententiam, non purgatoriis modo purgatique iam animi, sed politicis quoque virtutibus beatum fieri."

[536] For a discussion of the dichotomy contained in Petrarch's letter to Marco Portonario, see Takada,

the correspondence with Marco Portonario that, by both entering *Cartusia* and by giving up the active life when he was at his prime (he was exactly thirty-five years old), Gherardo did not take Petrarch's advice.

As we can read in the *De otio*, Petrarch thinks that there is time for redemption and ultimate *felicitas*. As I argued in the first chapter, one of the main aims of the *De otio* is to redefine happiness. Those who arrogantly think they are happy because of the mere fact that they live between the walls of a cloister are wrong. True happiness can only be gauged at the end of one's life, for "felix [*scil.* est] qui totius vie devium et longe lucis errorem facili compendio correxit ad vesperam".[537] Petrarch continues in his explanation by asking the following questions: Did not David, though forgetful of all the gifts God had bestowed on him and burdened with the weight of many crimes, receive forgiveness? Did not Saul, the tenacious persecutor of Christ, also become Saint Paul who was gladly persecuted for Christ? Let us not forget Augustine who had strenuously fought against the true faith only to fight for it. And was not Mary Magdalene, "mulier peccatrix ... de cive babilonica" transformed into "Ierusalem celestis civis"? Was she also not so profoundly "reformata" through mercy that she was placed in heaven among the holy virgins, second only to the Mother of Christ?[538] St Martin of Tours, whom Philippe de Cabassoles venerated,[539] would startle his hearers by saying that even the Devil could be saved if he would only freely will to repent of his sins.[540] Surely the same would be possible for human sinners, even for one who has fallen down a cliff face from the height of innocence to the bottom of the Sorgue. One day Petrarch, the Babylonian sinner, a second Mary Magdalene, will

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1999, pp.107-112.
[537] *De otio*, p.682.
[538] *ibid.*
[539] *Sen.*, XIV 15.
[540] Sulpicius Severus *Vita Martini*, 22.

also be allowed to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

The message is fully in line with one of the fundamental contentions of the *De otio*: "Nam virtus in infirmitate perficitur". Petrarch, therefore, exhorts the Carthusian monks to seek out war, "non quidem pro se, sed propter Cristi gloriam et eternam pacem".[541] The freedom to sin is the essence of virtue. Petrarch reminds his readers that Rome remained virtuous for as long as there was her supreme enemy, Carthage. Lot remained virtuous for as long as he remained in Sodom. Petrarch, consequently, will remain a virtuous warrior chasing after the fragments of his soul and thus producing the *Canzoniere* for as long as he can manage to remain below the mighty walls of traditional monasticism.

At the end of the *De otio*, Petrarch paraphrases John's description of Mary Magdalene about to be stoned.[542] The sinning woman, however, becomes a man. In other words, Petrarch knows that he is also Mary Magdalene.

> Nullus hominum sine peccato est, sed peccatori dicitur:
> 'Peccasti?' Quiesce. Quiescite ergo, vacate, otium agite,
> videte, gaudete, pro me flete…

The fact that Petrarch, in the very explicit of the *De otio religioso*, ends with a dramatic superimposition of his own self on to the role of the Magdalene, finds a parallel superimposition in a minor work which is implicit throughout the *De otio*. I am referring to the sonnet 190 "Una candida cerva" to which we saw an allusion to Julius Caesar and, therefore, to imperial authority, in the line "veni, vidi, vici". There is an allusion to the same sonnet in the semantic equivalence between the "veni" and "abii" of the *De otio* (referring to Petrarch's quick 1347 visit to Montrieux), on the one hand, and the "apparve" and "sparve" of the Christ-like doe in the sonnet, on the other. We also saw the reference to Caesar in the line from the sonnet, "Nessun mi tocchi – libera farmi al mio Cesare parve". It is here that we

have another case of the above-mentioned superimposition. It is necessary, however, to make some preliminary considerations.

"Nessun mi tocchi" has been taken to translate the famous syntagma, "Noli me tangere" of John 20,17.[543] This is the scene in which Mary Magdalene goes to the tomb of Jesus, presumably as a myrrhophore, that is, as an 'ointment-bearer', to anoint her Master's body with myrrh. She, therefore, is the first person to seek out the Lord after His death. She consequently appears as the first real believer in the Resurrection and worthier of saintliness than the Apostles. Indeed, she could well be described as the *Apostola Apostolorum*.[544] Two angels ask her why she is crying and in answering them she turns to see Jesus whom she takes, at first, for a gardener. Jesus calls her by her name, which provokes her use of "Rabboni" and, therefore, her recognition of the resurrection of Christ. The New Testament does not explicitly record her wanting to touch Jesus, but it is possible to infer that now she spontaneously moves to touch or even embrace him. It is at this point that he wards her off saying, "Noli me tangere; nondum enim ascendi ad Patrem meum; vade autem ad fratres meos et dic eis: Ascendo ad Patrem meum et Patrem vestrum, Deum meum et Deum vestrum." Presumably, it is at this point that Christ disappears.

Drawing upon a whole series of deer-based Christophanies described in epics and *vitae sanctorum*, Petrarch obviously wanted to re-create the scene of the Resurrection of Christ and His appearance to Mary Magdalene, but in Vaucluse, where he probably composed sonnet 190.[545] He must also have been influenced by Magdalenic iconography. Together with the already-mentioned San Lorenzo

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[541] *De otio*, p. 614.
[542] *Io.*, 8:3-11.
[543] See Santagata, 1996, p.827; Cocco, 1992, p.94; Lokaj, 1993-1995, p.98-113.
[544] Haskins, 1994, p.58-97.
[545] *RVF*, 190 3, "fra due riviere, all'ombra d'un alloro" is probably an allusion to the Sorgue and the

Maggiore in Naples, Petrarch most certainly must have seen the many depictions of the saint in French cathedrals and in Italy, such as in the Giottesque cycles in the Arena of Padua, in the Orsini Chapel in the Lower Basilica of Assisi, where she is shown in her Provençal cave, in the *Maestà* by Simone Martini in the Palazzo Pubblico of Siena, in the Accademia of Florence by the thirteenth-century Maestro della Maddalena and, above all, in the *Noli me tangere* by none other than Giotto himself in the Scrovegni Chapel in Padua. Until Donatello the following century, the Magdalene was always depicted at the height of her beauty, in the fashion of the moment and with beautiful flowing tresses. In a word, Mary Magdalene was a model beautiful *peccatrix* not only for any sinner, but for Laura herself. It is from this point of view that Duperray is probably right to have seen a substantial role model for Laura in the saint from Magdala and, therefore, a source of inspiration for Petrarch's *Canzoniere*.

Indeed, it is the stance adopted by Petrarch, that is, as he who gazes into the eyes of the doe in sonnet 190, that again Petrarch places himself in the role of Mary Magdalene. It is also probably due to the urge to touch the doe, as Mary had tried to touch Jesus, that Petrarch falls into the water of the Sorgue. Like Christ, the doe itself disappears as suddenly as it had appeared. Furthermore, John demonstrates that, by going to the tomb, Mary Magdalene's conversion was so total that she was divinely chosen as the first person to have the privilege to see Christ after the resurrection. Analogously, Petrarch also experiences a second baptism in his falling into the Sorgue. Furthermore, as I have already pointed out, for Petrarch, falling into the **Sor**gue is literally part of a re**sur**rection.[546] I must add that it is with sonnet 190 that he ends the "parte in vita di Madonna Laura" in the *Forma di Giovanni*

Durence in Vaucluse.

[546] *Sin. nom.*, II 2, "Sorga = sorgens"; *Epyst. Metr.*, III 15, *Epyst. Extrav.*, (*Var.*, 42.1) "Sorgia=surgit".

which, as we saw in the chapter on the *De otio*, was compiled by Malpaghini around 1366. This supports the hypothesis of a devotion to the Magdalene in Petrarch's later years, but with the creation of a *fiction* of earlier veneration nevertheless.

It would seem, in conclusion, that Petrarch's conception of Mary Magdalene is an intimate, implicit part of his conception of real *mutatio vitae*. The fact that Gherardo had to be reminded that her cave was near his monastery, that he, as we shall see better in the next chapter, did not reform Montrieux as the saint had been *reformata*, must mean that Gherardo, according to Petrarch, had not undergone a *mutatio vitae* quite to the same extent as Petrarch was undergoing his own. As we shall see in the ensuing analysis of the *Familiares*, Gherardo's conversion is classifiable as Augustinian, but without any intellectual component whatsoever. On the other hand, Petrarch's profoundly intellectual conversion is also Augustinian, but intertwined with his devotion to St Francis and Mary Magdalene. Whereas Gherardo's 1342 conversion is surprisingly sudden and expected, Petrarch's conversion is slower, but more intellectually demanding. Via the insertion late in life of the Magdalenic fiction, Petrarch endows his narrative of conversion with a certain chronological precedence over Gherardo's conversion. In other words, Petrarch's conversion started earlier than Gherardo's, it lasted longer and was infinitely deeper.

Chapter Four

Gherardo in the *Familiares*

Preliminary considerations

The *Rerum familiarium libri* contain 350 letters written over a relatively long period of time, to various people and for very different reasons. Given the main aim of the present thesis, the investigation undertaken here regards a very specific sub-group of *res familiares* - the letters which Petrarch wrote to and about his brother Gherardo. For reasons of brevity, these letters will be referred to as the "Gerardine letters". Elsewhere I have confronted this sub-group exclusively from the point of view of narrative technique,[547] content and intention.[548] My work on the narrative technique employed has identified certain constituent elements which seem to be characteristic of the sub-group. These elements are: the Mt Ventoux letter (*Fam.*, IV 1) as both anticipation and corollary of the entire sub-group; the usage of men either dead or no longer seen; the opposition Provence-Italy; implicit comparison or the "unspoken"; the use of hyperboles; digression; the role of *fatum*; eventide. As far as content and intention are concerned, my general conclusion is that Petrarch creates an *accessus ad auctorem* whereby he excludes Gherardo from the direct reading of St Augustine in the ascent of Mt Ventoux, only to lead him up the mountain of poetical, philosophical and theological exegesis through the letters he writes to him. Only in the last letter will Petrarch then present St Augustine to Gherardo directly. The model emerging seems to be that of the humanist, *ex claustro*, who teaches the almost illiterate monk, *in claustro*, how to develop divine hermeneutics. Petrarch's *docere* of the *De otio* becomes, here, his role as *preceptor*.

Seeing that the name "Petrarch" is a modified form of his original patronymic 'Petracchi', it does not technically, therefore, also belong to Gherardo,

whose cognomen might plausibly have remained in the form of the original patronymic, *Petracchi*. Consequently, "Petrarch" will be taken to mean Francis Petrarch.

The Gerardine sub-group contains fifteen letters. Nine letters are addressed to five different people: the *Familiares* IV 1 (to Dionigi da Borgo San Sepolcro), IX 2, X 2 (to Socrates), XIII 5 (to Francesco Nelli), XV 2, XV 3 (to Zanobi da Strada), XVI 8 (to Angelo Tosetti), XVI 9 and XVI, 10 (to Zanobi da Strada). Six letters are addressed directly to Gherardo (the *Familiares* X 3, X4, X5, XVI 2, XVII 1 and XVIII 5).[549]

The first consideration to make is the fact that modern criticism has already pointed out the chronological discrepancies inherent in the *Familiares*. For example, while Petrarch pretends to have written the famous letter depicting the ascent of Mt Ventoux in 1336, we know, however, as I pointed out in the last chapter, that it was probably written almost twenty years later.[550] This means that, from the purely chronological point of view, the first appearance of Gherardo in the *Familiares* does not occur in 1336, but in 1350 with the *Familiaris* IX 2. In order to better understand why Petrarch wanted to introduce Gherardo so early, I have decided to read the Gerardine letters by respecting the order in which they were inserted into the collection. After all, the collection itself is indeed referred to by Petrarch as *liber*, or better, as several *libri*. It is, therefore, a work to be read as it stands, a narrative to be unfolded in the very order in which it is presented.

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[547] Lokaj, 2000.
[548] Lokaj, 1999.
[549] It is comforting to note that my decision to study this sub-set of *Familiares* is methodologically in line with Constable (1980, pp.68-70) who identified the same sub-set as the most demonstrative of Petrarch's views concerning monasticism.
[550] Billanovich, 1947, pp.193-198; Billanovich, 1966, pp.397-400; O'Connell, 1983, p.507; Robbins, 1985, pp.533-553.

Petrarch's contextualization of the Gerardine letters, together with the alteration of their true dates of composition in order to establish an ideal composition/chronology, creates an *ordo* which would truly be difficult to interpret as dictated by chance: three mentions of Gherardo (*Fam.*, IV,1; IX,2; X,2) are followed by three letters sent to Gherardo (X,3; X,4; X,5). These in turn are followed by three other mentions of Gherardo (XIII,5; XV,2; XV,3), and then by a letter to Gherardo (XVI,2). There are then another three mentions of Gherardo (XVI,8; XVI,9; XVI,10) and the conclusive two letters to Gherardo (XVII,1; XVIII,5). The macro-structure of the Gerardine letters has the *ordo* - 3,3,3,1,3,2. The ordering of the letters, that is, six groups based on the number three, would seem to somehow reflect the traditional Christian ternary scheme allusive to the Trinity. The ordering, therefore, would seem to be deliberate and not dictated by chance.

For purposes of clarity, I shall first of all analyse the letters in which Gherardo is mentioned. I shall then analyse those directly addressed to Gherardo.

The *Familiares* in which Gherardo is mentioned

The *Familiaris* IV 1 *Ad Dyonisium de Burgo Sancti Sepulcri ordinis Sancti Augustini et Sacre Pagine professorem, de curis propriis*

The Ventoux letter as fiction

The Ascent of Mt Ventoux described in *Familiaris* IV 1 is an allegorical account depicting, among other things, Petrarch's relationship with his brother. It is, furthermore, the fiftieth letter in the *corpus* of 350 letters. As such, it occupies a numerically, and perhaps even numerologically, significant position. In this way, it

can thus summarise the issues already confronted in the first four books (especially poetics and friendship), and introduce, or at least allude to, the issues still to be confronted in the following 300 letters. Moreover, Petrarch's description is achieved with great parsimony of adjectives and stylisation of static gestures. It has been argued that the models used by Petrarch to recount his own climb of a mountain were sufficiently clear in the minds of his contemporaries for him to simply allude to the climb as a metaphor of ascension without too much description. The models ranged from biblical accounts (Christ's Transformation on Mt Tabor), to Greek history (Livy's description of King Philip of Macedon's climb of Mt Haemus in Thessaly)[551], and even to legends concerning Alexander the Great.[552] The Ventoux letter is allegorical literature structured under the influence of clear Christian and classical models.

Billanovich *et alii*[553] have moved the dating of the *Familiaris* IV 1 from 1336 to 1352-3. This means that the *Familiaris* in question was written after his discovery of many Ciceronian letters in Verona, and after Petrarch's subsequent desire to write the *Familiares* and the *Metrice* as distinct *corpora*. Indeed Billanovich believes that the Ventoux letter was never actually sent at all to Naples, but composed *specifically* for the *Familiarium rerum libri*.[554]

The *Familiaris* IV 1 presents many affinities, which will be discussed later, with the *Secretum* and, especially, with the *De otio*, on which Petrarch started work again around 1353. Furthermore, Martinelli points out that Boccaccio, in his *De montibus* written after 1354-55, most certainly would have included Mt Ventoux if Petrarch had really climbed it. The formerly unknown mountain would have thus

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[551] Liv., 40, 21, 1 - 22, 9.
[552] Cf. Zanzotto, 1996, Scivoletto, 2000.
[553] Billanovich, 1947, pp.193-8; Billanovich, 1966, pp.397-399; O'Connell, 1983, p.507; Robbins, 1985.
[554] Billanovich, 1966, p.400.

become as famous as the Sorgue and Arquà. Even if there was a tangible historical basis for the letter, it is safe to conclude that the re-elaboration of the episode is dictated by literary needs and is, therefore, fundamentally fiction.

The fictional nature of this climb automatically engenders some serious consequences for our own stance as readers of this letter. Dionigi da Borgo San Sepolcro had met Petrarch in 1333 and had given him the famous pocket edition of Augustine's *Confessions* which Petrarch was to casually open during his climb of Mount Ventoux in 1336.[555] Petrarch was destined to carry this edition with him on all his travels only to give it to another Augustinian monk some forty years later, a certain Luigi Marsili, who presumably would carry on the tradition.[556] Around 1339-40, Dionigi is summoned to Naples by Robert d'Anjou. Given that the king is fondly appreciative of Dionigi, Petrarch writes to Dionigi to tell him that he is contemplating taking up Robert's offer of the poetic coronation rather than the Parisian offer.[557] In the spring of 1342 Dionigi died, as can be inferred from the moving consolatory metrical letter Petrarch writes to Robert D'Anjou immediately afterwards.[558] If Billanovich *et alii* are right concerning the 1352-3 dating, then the addressee of this letter had been dead for approximately ten years by the time Petrarch actually feigns to write to him. If Petrarch had really written this letter in 1336, as Suitner has recently suggested,[559] then he would have been able to tell Dionigi all about his ascension of Mt Ventoux directly to his face, as Dionigi was still chaplain to Cardinal Colonna in Avignon. Petrarch, however, writes to him as if Dionigi were already in Naples: "inextimabilis me ardor invasit et amicum et

[555] Wilkins, 1964, p.25.
[556] *Sen.*, XV 7 cit. in Wilkins, 1964, p.320 & Billanovich, 1966, p.395.
[557] *Fam.*, IV,2 cit. in Wilkins, 1964, p.43.
[558] *Metr.* I, 13 cit. in Wilkins, 1964, p.53; see also Lokaj, 2000a.
[559] The recent work on Todi carried out by Suitner (Suitner, 2000) has made it possible to ascertain that Dionigi was often called down to Italy to settle disputes in the 1330's. It becomes plausible, therefore, to hypothesize that Petrarch could actually have had a living Dionigi in mind, in Italy, in 1336.

patriam revidendi".[560] Obviously Petrarch knew he was writing to someone in his past.

Writing to dead people was not, however, altogether new for Petrarch. He had analogously written and was still to write several *Familiares* and *Epistole metrice* to dead people such as Homer, Cicero, Seneca, Varro, Quintilian, Livy, Asinius Pollio, Horace and Virgil. Seeing, however, that the *Familiaris* IV 1 is probably the result of Petrarch's idealised dating system, and given that the addressee can hardly be numbered amongst the above-mentioned classical writers in some sort of *bella scola*, perhaps the implicit message is that Dionigi da Borgo San Sepolcro himself is used to represent something very specific. As an allegorical addressee, he might have been used to represent the type of ideal reader Petrarch was writing to and for. In other words, Dionigi perhaps represents the *modus legendi* Petrarch hoped his future readers would adopt. This *modus legendi* would necessarily be Augustinian.

Petrarch's choice of companion becomes extremely interesting in this light. None of his friends seems to be suitable. They are either too slow or too eager, too sad or too happy, too fat or too thin, too taciturn or too talkative etc. In a word, they all have defects which, though tolerable at home, become just too much on a journey. At this point, Petrarch turns to his younger brother, Gherardo. O'Connell has suggested that the choice of Gherardo "is the first exposition of the theme of searching afar for what was close at hand all along, the theme that will reach full expression when Petrarch, having laboriously ascended the mountain, finds in his own pocket the advice to search for wonders in his own mind."[561] The same scholar defines Gherardo as "already advanced beyond his older brother in spiritual

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[560] *Fam.*, IV 1, 18. Cf. Billanovich, 1966, p.396.
[561] O'Connell, 1983, pp.509-510.

maturity."[562] The Gherardo of the letter, however, could not have been any happier that he should hold a place of both brother and friend in Petrarch's heart. This Gherardo spontaneously decides to accompany him in the ascent of Mt Ventoux.[563]

This Gherardo *agens*, however, if Billanovich *et alii* are right, would never have been able to accompany his elder brother on such a hike because, in 1353, he was safely confined to the boundaries of the *desertum* of Montrieux. This same Gherardo, much like the idealised reader, Dionigi, did not really exist *in carne ed ossa.* He, rather, represented something else. As Robbins puts it, "Gherardo [...] performs an indispensable narrative function, albeit negative: to mark the crookedness that establishes Petrarch as a protagonist in a drama of salvation, to point to the path that Petrarch does *not* take."[564]

The theme enucleated here of brotherly friendship is, therefore, suspect. We shall see later in the ensuing analysis of the *Familiares* concerning Gherardo just how much of a friend Petrarch considered his younger brother. Let us now only bear in mind that Petrarch wants to tell his readers how this ascent was carried out:- though supposedly in the company of a brother/friend, not to mention two servants, Petrarch explicitly states at the beginning and again at the end of the letter that he had climbed the mountain and had come down completely on his own: *ascendi – remeavi.*

The move towards *Romanitas*

Prompted by his reading of Livy the day before, Petrarch had felt the urge to replicate an act which he does not know whether historical or mythical. He thus makes an explicit parallel between himself and Philip of Macedon who, whilst

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[562] *ibid.*, p.516.
[563] *Fam.*, IV 1, 3-5.
[564] Robbins, 1985, p.536.

waging war against Rome, had supposedly climbed Mount Haemon in Thessaly. From the top of this mountain, Philip had been able to see two different seas at the same time, the Adriatic and the Black Sea. This version, however, is not in Livy, but in Pomponius Mela. For Livy, both seas were not visible from the top of Mount Haemon. Petrarch knew about this discrepancy between the two classical historians but chose to present this version as if it were contained in Livy.[565] The inherent symbolism in Petrarch's reading of the Livian account is, therefore, suspect, a sign of something important to the discerning reader. The earlier reference to the Romans, however, might support the following interpretation: a great man has climbed a great mountain with great difficulty. He has, however, overcome these difficulties, whatever they might have been. This man is now turning his back on his known world (*Pontus Euxinus*) so as to face and take on a world he now wants to conquer. This other world lies beyond another narrow body of water, the Adriatic.[566] This other world is Italy.

The period 1352-3 is the one in which Petrarch was writing his most polemical works such as *Sine nomine*, *Secretum*, *De otio* and the *Invectives*. In 1353 he visited his brother Gherardo for the second and last time in Montrieux. This was the period in which his rapport with the papal see was becoming more and more strained. He was even being accused of necromancy.[567] The moment had come for him to leave Provence forever, never again to return. His only viable and logical alternative was Italy. Petrarch, like Philip of Macedon, was about to take on Rome.

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[565] Other authors to speak of Mt Haemos are Pliny, Solinus, Martianus Capella, Virgil and Horace. See Billanovich, 1966, pp.391-392.

[566] *Fam.*, IV 1, 2.

[567] See Feo, 1988, pp.61-3. Here Feo points out that, despite the fact that Petrarch publicly declared the absurd nature of the accusations and the asininity of his accusers, some doubt remained regarding the orthodoxy of Petrarchan "scientia". This persisting doubt jeopardized his relationship both with the papal Curia in Avignon and with Ugolino de' Rossi, bishop of Parma and direct superior of the archdeacon Petrarch. See also O'Rourke Boyle, 1991, p.48.

With the statement, "Eo pervenire volunt omnes, sed, ut ait Naso, "velle parum est; cupias, ut re potiaris oportet,""[568] Petrarch openly admits that he is quoting from Ovid. As we saw in the *De otio* chapter concerning Lucretius, explicit quotation is unusual unless there is some other message. Indeed, the quote might be indicative of something else other than the obvious gnomic content. In fact, the quote comes from the *Epistulae ex Ponto*.[569] These letters were written and sent to Rome by Ovid who had been exiled by Augustus to spend the rest of his days in Tomis on the Black Sea. Like the *Tristia*, these letters from the *Pontus Euxinus* are full of Ovid's desperation, fear and desires to return to Rome. Ovid's fatherland, however, is denied and even after Augustus's death, Ovid too will die relegated to this land of barbarians and hardship. Perhaps *this* is the inherent justification for the quote. In other words, perhaps Petrarch was relying on the erudition of his ideal reader to see a parallel between Ovid, the theorising poet of love, and Petrarch, another theorising poet of love. Both Ovid and Petrarch had been relegated to a land of barbarians and hardship (respectively Tomis and Provence), and both equally yearned to return to a state of true *Romanitas*.

There is, however, also another parallel, but this time with Hannibal. In order, however, to arrive at the third assault on *Romanitas*, (Phillip, Ovid and now Hannibal) it is necessary to ascend to the Trinity:- the Father, the Son and Holy Ghost, but this time, through the most 'Roman' of Latin poets, Virgil. Let us, therefore, push on with the climb.

The climb is achieved "non sine multa difficultate".[570] Mt Ventoux is, in fact, a steep, massive and almost inaccessible mound of rocky earth. However, a poet comes to aide him both morally and poetically. The extremely well known line

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[568] *Fam.*, IV 1, 13.
[569] *Pont.*, 3, 1, 35.
[570] *Fam.*, IV 1, 6.

from the first book of the *Georgics*, that is, "labor omnia vincit Improbus"[571] and the antonomastic designation of the poet simply as "poeta" unequivocally suggest Virgil.[572] Many commentators of this *Familiaris* have left this point at that. It is my hypothesis, however, that this Virgilian quote demands some further consideration. First of all, it must be said that the adjective *improbus* has several nuances. It suggests the "mons improbus" of the *Aeneid* which was immense and lofty. It occurs in a simile which Virgil uses to describe the mighty Turnus who was attacking the Trojans. Again, therefore, there is the idea of someone taking on Rome.[573] Such semantic value now transferred to the effort required to scale Mt Ventoux would perfectly match the massive character already described of this new difficulty. The second nuance is directly given, of course, in the context from which Petrarch extrapolated it. This context concerns the origins of humanity and the mechanics of progress. The various *artes* had come into being because the adverse conditions, "durae [...] res", of sheer poverty, *egestas*, had forced man to use his audacity and ingenuity, hence the "Labor [...] improbus". Such Virgilian reasoning, which we also saw in the *De otio* chapter concerning golden-ageism, is at the basis of Petrarch's concept of art. Art, in its wider meaning of activity, progress, *negotium*, is created when we manage to ameliorate some current condition of poverty, abjection or inertia ('inertia' in its etymological sense of *non ars*). The following question arises: To what poverty, *otium* or *inertia* was Petrarch implicitly alluding? Was this poverty his own or Gherardo's?

It has been suggested that the shepherd, or "pastor vociferans", whom Francesco and Gherardo meet at the beginning of their climb of Mt Ventoux, is St Augustine who had attempted a similar climb under the same hot-headed impulse of

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[571] *Georg.*, 1, 145-6.

[572] Analogous, therefore, to the antonomastic designation of Aristotle in Dante and many others simply as *philosophus*, that is, *the* philosopher *par excellence*.

youth.[574] Let us, however, imagine that the shepherd is Virgil. Indeed, this would well fit in with Petrarch's previous quote from the *Georgics*. Though presented also with the reverential epithet, *senex*, he is almost derided in Petrarch's use of the present participle "vociferans" literally meaning 'raving on'.[575] This apparent contradiction, however, is probably only meant to underline precisely what the two brothers lacked, that is, respect and certain experiential knowledge. Here we begin to understand just what the aforementioned poverty consisted in. Much like Virgil the shepherd and poet, Petrarch will return from his ascent only to confront, then, penance and fatigue – *penitentia et labor*. From the point of view of Petrarch's relationship with Gherardo, what we must ascertain is the fact that the two brothers are presented now in exactly the same way, that is, as young, impetuous youths incapable of learning from their *maiores*. If the *pastor* really were an allusion to Virgil, it would follow that the two siblings are incapable of learning from classical poetry.

With the following "Sed",[576] Petrarch finally understands Virgil's *penitentia* and *labor*. That is, Petrarch also becomes ashamed (*pigeret*) and subject to futile efforts (*labor*). On the other hand, it is perhaps true that Gherardo had already made it up to the top much more quickly and directly than Petrarch, but Gherardo does not have anywhere near the same opportunity to *learn* from the climb. Gherardo had hurriedly climbed the slope but only to sleep once he had got to the top. Gherardo is the same as he was when he had started the climb. There is no *mutatio*. Petrarch, instead, has already begun to benefit from the experience. In the end, though, both brothers walk in the same way, that is, they reach the same status. In this light, let

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[573] *Aen.*, 12, 687.
[574] O'Connell, 1983, p.514.
[575] *Fam.*, IV 1, 6-8. Petrarch's Virgil is the opposite, therefore, of Dante's Virgil who, in *If.* I 63, "per lungo silenzio parea fioco".
[576] *Fam.*, IV 1, 9-10.

us not overlook "penitus", Petrarch's peering "deep within" his heart. In the end *this* is what gets Petrarch to the top, not certainly the juvenile unthinking impetus of his younger brother. Again here, the question is raised: If the climb is a metaphor of spiritual perfection *in fieri*, then which of the two approaches is the more sincere and pondered? The picture which Petrarch the author is painting for us is that, for Gherardo, the climb is important, for Petrarch, it is the climbing itself.

> Vixdum collem illum reliqueramus, et ecce prioris anfractus oblitus, iterum ad inferiora deicior, atque iterum peragratis vallibus dum viarum facilem longitudinem sector, in longam difficultatem incido. Differebam nempe ascendendi molestiam, sed ingenio humano rerum natura non tollitur, nec fieri potest ut corporeum aliquid ad alta descendendo perveniat. Quid multa? Non sine fratris risu, hoc indignanti michi ter aut amplius intra paucas horas contigit.[577]

Petrarch is again placed in the lower dales. The sentence might be translated with "valleys which I had already roamed". His choice of Latin verb, *peragrare*, however, is intrinsically indicative of his particular way of travelling along the road. The verb indicates that he had been, as is again now, a pilgrim in its true etymological sense. The valleys had been "peragratae", that is, he had travelled along them as if he had been going *per agros*, through fields as a *peregrinus*. This is the same verb of travel used by Paul in the *Acts*, for example, "ut Paulus peragratis superioribus partibus veniret Ephesum".[578] This linguistic and odeporical link with the Apostles suggests another link which will be discussed later. Let us realise for the moment that Petrarch's arduous climb, with the various instances of stumbling, falls and lapses, is intimately connected to the idea of pilgrimage developed in the *De otio*. This in turn would suggest a strong association between pilgrimage and the metaphors contained in Petrarch's self-designation in the *De otio* as "bellator",

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[577] *Fam.*, IV 1, 11.
[578] *Act* 19, 1.

"nauta" or even "venator" while fighting outside the walls of *Cartusia* for his *otium litteratum*.

We saw in the chapter on the *De otio* that two antithetical and opposing conceptions of pilgrimage are at issue.[579] Petrarch saw himself as the noble, intellectual *peregrinus in exilio* in a dynamic and varied walk of life. Cloistered monasticism in his view was, therefore, not ennobling and, even worse, fruitless. If there was no learning in it either, as was the case in Montrieux, then it could even leave the monks open to the works of the Devil. On the other hand, the Carthusian *Consuetudines* (governed by a generic Benedictine outlook) was deeply against pilgrimage, for such wandering could literally becoming a spiritual erring in the clutches of the Devil. Pilgrimage was, therefore, to be undertaken exclusively within one's heart and, above all, within the *desertum* of the cloister. Given the famed rigidity of Carthusian monastic organisation (*Stat crux dum volvitur orbis*, etc)[580], Gherardo, a lowly *clericus redditus*, could hardly have taken it upon himself (even if he had wanted to) to leave the monastery behind and follow his big brother. The two conceptions of pilgrimage were, therefore, inevitably at loggerheads with each other in a no-win situation. From this point of view I feel that the "reward" Constable speaks of for further study on the "possible influence on Petrarch of Carthusian ideals and spirituality" might not be too rich.[581] The two conceptions of pilgrimage (of which the brothers were the literary Petrarchan representatives) saw that the other walk of life was fruitless and, what was worse, a trap set by the Devil. Once the two brothers had chosen (and, indeed, both had), they were destined never to meet again on the same road of life.

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[579] See nn. 15-18.
[580] See n. 24.
[581] Constable, 1980, p.88.

Petrarch mirrors this very position in the *Familiares* of the period. The *Familiaris* XVI 8, *Ad Lelium*, which will be analysed in greater depth in this chapter, was written *Ad fontem Sorgie*, just after Petrarch had visited Gherardo for the second and last time in 1353.[582] This *Familiaris* represents a strong antithesis between the inert monasticism of the Carthusians of Montrieux, on the one hand, and the intrinsic moral and religious nobility of a group of Roman *matronae*, on the other. As in the Mt Ventoux letter, here also Petrarch becomes a pilgrim.[583] Petrarch consciously identifies himself with these noble women who, with respect to what the static cloister had to offer, had found a more profound and pondered way of drawing closer to the divine via a pilgrimage of both the body and soul.

Petrarch thus sees the plight of the soul in concomitance with that of the body.[584] The soul, of course, has some advantage over the body inasmuch as it is immortal and not weighed down. However, the experience of physically climbing Mount Ventoux is actually easier than the journey of the soul back to a close communion with God. The climbing is not as yet spiritual. In this light, the fact that Gherardo had had no difficulties whatsoever in scaling the mountain, the fact that he had made it to the top so quickly, in other words, the fact that he had become a Carthusian monk *in portu*, perhaps needs to be re-addressed. If the physical journey indicates intellectual development, then the underlying message would seem to be that the journey of both body and soul should occur simultaneously. Gherardo does not do this, whereas Petrarch does.

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[582] Cf. Lokaj, 1998, pp.33-39.

[583] Petrarch uses the verb *pergere*, "revisurus pergerem" in its odeporical sense of "to embark upon a long journey", perhaps not without linguistic-psychological contaminations with the adv. *peregre*, which occurs later in the same letter (*Fam.*, XVI 8, 8).

[584] *Fam.*, IV 1, 15, "Atque utinam vel sic animo peragam iter illud, cui diebus et noctibus suspiro, sicut, superatis tandem difficultatibus, hodierum iter corporeis pedibus peregi! Ac nescio annon longe facilius esse debeat quod per ipsum animum agilem et immortalem sine ullo locali motu in ictu trepidantis oculi fieri potest, quam quod successu temporis per moribundi et caduci corporis obsequium ac sub gravi membrorum fasce gerendum est".

Such an emphasis on a personal understanding of the divine is encapsulated in the almost gnomic expression "sed ingenio humano rerum natura non tollitur".[585] Petrarch has realised in this climb that his ingenuity on its own is not sufficient to raise the level of his spirit, that is, to reach "altiora". It is necessary, therefore, to operate a shift or a heightening in his exegesis of the self. Petrarch had already peered "penitus" into his heart. It is this stance, in opposition to the futile, un-pondered climbing, which he now develops further.

> Sic sepe delusus quadam in valle consedi. Illic a corporeis ad incorporea volucri cogitatione transiliens, his aut talibus me ipsum compellabam verbis: - Quod totiens hodie in ascensu montis huius expertus es, id scito et tibi accidere et multis, accedentibus ad beatam vitam; sed idcirco tam facile ab hominibus non perpendi, quod corporis motus in aperto sunt, animorum vero invisibiles et occulti.[586]

In classical Latin, the causative use of the past participle "delusus" would refer back to Gherardo's laughter, "fratris risu". In this light, it would seem, therefore, that Petrarch stops because of his brother's youthful lack of sensitivity. In mediaeval Latin, however, *delusus* more typically refers to the more modern sense of delusion, the loss of hope or bearing, in a word, bafflement. In fact, the adverb "sepe" would better support the latter interpretation in reference, therefore, to "ter aut amplius [...] contigit". Petrarch stops, it would follow, not because of his brother's mockery, but because he had realised that his own "ingenium humanum" was not enough to fathom out the multitude of pathways leading up and down the mountain.

This bafflement causes Petrarch to sit down. The choice of verb, however, is multifarious in meaning and allusion. *Consedi* is the perfect of both *consedeo* and *consido.* The first verb is found in the *Vulgate* meaning "to sit together". It is thus

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[585] *Fam.*, IV 1, 11.
[586] *ibid.*, 12.

used by Jerome in his *Vulgate*. *Consido*, instead, is widely used in classical Latin with the meaning of "to stop, to set up camp, to secure a stronghold, to reach the shore, to arrive". The semantic sphere in Petrarch's use of the verb probably employs both values. Thus his sitting down takes on some programmatic meaning within the greater context of his faith-based poetics.

The "certain valley" is the *locus amoenus* described in the *De otio*[587] and the *Psalmi penitentiales*[588] as a perfect setting for his poetic theophany. The traveller is weary because the pathway to Sion is arduous, narrow, rocky and extremely steep – just as Petrarch is experiencing the ascent of Mount Ventoux. It is here that he finds a "fons gratie et vite", which represents both *refrigerium* and a second baptism. It is here that, in order to see the *mons sanctus* of Sion, a "beatifica visio, ascensu animi et sacris atque altis cogitationibus opus [est]".[589] Petrarch carries out the "altae cogitationes" deemed necessary in the *De otio* by heightening (*transilire*) the object of his thoughts, by shifting from corporeal to incorporeal things.[590] In order to do this, his *cogitatio* must sprout wings and fly up into the heavens. Not without some allusion to the Homeric trope of "winged words", Petrarch's thought now becomes winged. In other words, only after such a second baptism of the intellect, that is, an acquisition of *Sapientia*, may one then resume the ascension.

The fruit of such lofty thoughts is presented in the form of reproach. The verb *compellare* is a juridical term in classical and mediaeval Latin meaning "to verbally attack someone, to call someone to answer, to accuse."[591] Petrarch, *compellans*, is thus his own plaintiff. An ideal reader of the letter such as Dionigi da

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[587] *De otio*, p.772, "iter [...] per opacas valles et prata roscida, per frondosos et faciles colles, secus amenas et floreas fluminum ripas" & *ibid.*, p.774, "Si enim fesso viatori tam suavis est cespes herbosus et sub umbra arboris exiguus fons, quale est inter mortalis vite molestias invenisse "fontem aque salientis in vitam eternam" et umbram illam, sub qua non ad brevis hore spatium neque ab estu solis tantum, sed in eternum ab omni adversitate protegamur et ab omni metu?".

[588] *Ps. pen.*, VII 16, 17.

[589] *De otio*, p.778.

[590] Cf. Dante's "trasumanare".

Borgo San Sepolcro, and even Gherardo himself, who had studied law with Petrarch at the *Studium* in Bologna, would easily have recognised that Petrarch was about to give himself the third degree. It is also the same verb, *compellare*, which becomes crucial in the very first letter sent to Gherardo, the *Familiaris* X 3 analysed below.

With this readjusted direct quote Petrarch "opens" the metaphor of the climb. The climb is indeed the way to a blessed life, sought by many but reached by few. Petrarch is one of the many "accedentes ad beatam vitam". Again here the dichotomy between Gherardo and Petrarch surfaces. Gherardo had been able to get to the top, to reach Sion in the traditional, canonical sense, in an extremely rapid and relatively easy fashion. Indeed, in the *De otio religioso*, as we have already seen, Petrarch describes Gherardo's pathway as a "servitium"[592] or *iter* which leads Gherardo and his Carthusian brethren to their *requies*. Such an *iter* is "planum, rectum, tutum [and] delectabile". Gherardo's *iter* is above all "breve" which occasions the *brevitas* of his climb here in the Mt Ventoux letter. The problem is, however, that most people are not like Gherardo. In the middle of the fourteenth century, most people are, perhaps, more like Petrarch, at least in the *laboratores-oratores* dichotomy. It is from this point of view that Gherardo is supposedly "felix",[593] whereas Petrarch is simply *homo*. Whereas Gherardo thinks he can now relax and forget about human cares, Petrarch effectively experiences and represents the plight of the common man.

When Petrarch writes, "Equidem vita, quam beatam dicimus, celso loco sita est; arcta, ut aiunt, ad illam ducit via",[594] he refers to the metaphor of the two

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[591] Cf. Ps. Cic. *Rhet. Her.* 4, 15, 22.
[592] *De otio*, p.572.
[593] In *Fam.*, X 3, 2, Gherardo is designated as "felix", and in *De otio*, pp.568-570, all the monks of Montrieux are called "felix Cristi familia", together with "dominice apes" and "bene nata gens".
[594] *Fam.*, IV 1, 13.

ways.[595] One way is easy and wide but leads to perdition, whereas the other is narrow and difficult but leads to bliss. The trope of the bifurcation is both Judaeo-Christian and classical. Just as Gherardo had not hesitated to go rushing straight up to the top, Petrarch had not hesitated to choose the easier of the two paths, the one leading downwards. However, as we have already seen, Petrarch adduces a sound reason for this, even though the same is necessarily in sharp contrast with the more ascetically Judaic component of his Christian heritage. Petrarch thus creates an interruption in the same tradition, a gnoseological shift on the way one can heighten one's *cognitio Dei*. One must fully know what it means to climb upwards before the climb can actually start. This entails fall and descent.

Petrarch describes the *modus peregrinandi* one ought to adopt in such a climb. The pattern established is similar to a chain of hills where, obviously, each hill would seem to symbolise a particular difficulty to overcome, a particular lesson to learn.[596] With this, the pattern established is assimilated to the ladder of Jacob in Genesis.[597] In the overcoming of every single hardship, in acquiring, consequently, every single necessary virtue, one can manage to climb right up to the top and get to Sion. The same syntagma is encountered in *De otio*, as we have already seen, in Petrarch's multiple use of *Psalm* 83, 8, "Ibunt de virtute in virtute; videbitur Deus deorum in Sion".[598] Within the semantic and poetical field of the Petrarchan metaphor of the pathway which leads to the *locus amoenus*, the *peregrinus* climbs the ladder *de virtute in virtutem* and *de voluptate minori in voluptatem summam.* This *voluptas summa* is the top of the mountain, the object of our pilgrimage.

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[595] Such as in the Essenic papyri of Qumran (Dead Sea Scrolls), Pseudo-Barnabas and the Didache (The Teaching of the Twelve apostles); For a discussion on this topic, see Simonetti, 1988, pp.39 *et passim*.

[596] *Fam.*, IV 1, 13, "Multi quoque colles intereminent et de virtute in virtutem preclaris gradibus ambulandum est; in summo finis est omnium et vie terminus ad quem **peregrinatio nostra** disponitur".

[597] *Gen.*, 28, 12.

[598] Cf. *De otio*, pp.772 & 778.

O'Connell paraphrases this with "Human weakness must be overcome step by step, in a process of psychological growth towards spiritual maturity."[599] If this is the case, then Gherardo's having been suddenly "abducted" by *Cartusia*, to which I shall return later, is in strident contrast with Petrarch's theory of conversion.

> Tu certe – nisi, ut in multis, in hoc quoque te fallis – non solum vis sed etiam cupis. Quid ergo te retinet? nimirum nichil aliud, nisi per terrenas et infimas voluptates planior et ut prima fronte videtur, expeditior via; veruntamen, ubi multum erraveris, aut sub pondere male dilati laboris ad ipsius te beate vite culmen oportet ascendere aut in convallibus peccatorum tuorum segnem procumbere; et si – quod ominari horreo – ibi te "tenebre et umbra mortis" invenerint, eternam noctem in perpetuis cruciatibus agere.[600]

This compelling reproach is carried out in the second person. It is automatically similar to another "speech" which Petrarch will insert into a text concerning the teaching of Christ[601] We shall read this insertion later as if Christ Himself were speaking in an apostrophe to Petrarch the writer-protagonist. Regarding the speech here, it is as if the words themselves were coming from elsewhere, that is, as if the words were not Petrarch's, as he initially wants us to think, but, rather, proffered by someone else.[602] Let us briefly analyse it from the point of view of the *topos* concerning the anxiety of dying.

This voice does not seem at all worried about what happens well before death, only about what would happen if death were to surprise Petrarch still in the valley of sin. One immediately thinks of a common motif depicted on many Romanesque churches, the soteriological battle between the angel and the devil to see which of the two might "win" the soul of the dying person. In Dante, for

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[599] O'Connell, 1983, p.511.
[600] *Fam.*, IV 1, 14.
[601] *Fam.*, X 3, 50-52.
[602] Indeed, the wonder contained in *Fam.*, IV 1, 15, "Hec michi cogitatio incredibile dictu est quantum ad ea que restabant et animum et corpus erexerit", corroborates the hypothesis according to which the

example, "per una lacrimetta" the "angel di Dio" saved Buonconte da Montefeltro from the clutches of the "angel d'inferno".[603] Similarly, despite his "Orribil [...] peccati", simply by converting and confessing at the very last moment, even the excommunicated Manfredi managed to avoid Inferno and get at least into Purgatory.[604] Sapia likewise got into Purgatory thanks to the prayers of the humble artisan, Pietro Pettinaio.[605] Conversely, Guido da Montefeltro had lived his life as a *uom d'arme* and had thought that by repenting, confessing and becoming "cordigliero" (a Franciscan friar) he might make amends and secure a place for himself in Purgatory. Boniface VIII then asks Guido to help him defeat the Colonna Family who refused to accept the abdication of Celestinus V and, therefore, the validity of Boniface's election. Once Guido had died, St Francis himself was told by a "nero cherubino loico" that Guido would go to Hell because of the "contradizion" between Guido's penance and his will to take up arms for the hypocritical pope.[606] The voice in Petrarch's letter is in line with this popular type of reasoning. That is, the voice is more concerned with the *modus moriendi* than with any *modus vivendi*, no matter how painstakingly achieved and no matter how anagogically inclined. In the letter we have already understood, however, that for Petrarch it was exactly the opposite. Even here, Petrarch creates an inversion in the conception of religious living. What matters is not how quickly you climb up to the top. What truly matters is, rather, what you learn and how you intimately change on the way from the climbing.

> Collis est omnium supremus, quem silvestres "Filiolum"
> vocant; cur, ignoro; nisi quod per antifrasim, ut quedam alia,

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voice came from elsewhere. It would thus seem to be essentially extraneous to Petrarch, perhaps the voice of his socialized conscience.

[603] *Purg.*, V 100-8.
[604] *ibid.*, III 121.
[605] *ibid.*, XIII 125-8.
[606] *If.* XXVII.

> dici suspicor: videtur enim vere pater omnium vicinorum montium.[607]

Feigned ignorance is common in Petrarch. It is part of his rhetorical stance which leaves the interpretation up to the reader and confers a greater mystical aura to the written page. First of all we know that Petrarch's ideal reader, perhaps at this point we could even imagine a Ludwig van Kempen, would instantaneously have recognised Petrarch himself as one of the *silvestres*, the forest dwellers, for the simple fact that *Silvanus* was a name or *senhal* by which Petrarch often called himself in many letters. *Silvius* is also Petrarch again in the *Bucolicum Carmen.*[608] Obviously Petrarch himself referred to the highest peak of Mount Ventoux, and we might add in an exquisitely Tuscan fashion, as "Il Figliuolo." And he knew exactly why. Inasmuch as this peak called 'The Son' refers to a higher concept, the Father, the direct allusion is to God the Almighty. This is perfectly in line with our interpretation of the emphasis given at the incipit of the letter to the adjective, *Altissimus* and strengthens the entire metaphor of the climb itself.[609] Furthermore, despite the strong probability that Petrarch knew and spoke Provençal very well, he has decided to incorrectly interpret the Provençal toponym, *fiholo*, which means 'small river'.[610] In other words, Petrarch has feigned ignorance in order to confer an anagogical value to his climb.

> Illius in vertice planities parva est; illic demum fessi conquievimus. Et quoniam audiisti quenam ascendentis in pectus ascenderint cure, audi, pater, et reliqua; et unam, precor, horam tuam relegendis unius diei mei actibus tribue.[611]

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[607] *ibid.*, 16.
[608] *Ecl.* I *Parthenias.*
[609] For the epithet *Altissimus* designating the Lord, cf. *Ps.*, 47 (46), 3, "quoniam Dominus Altissimus, terribilis, rex magnus super omnem terram". Cf. also St Francis's *Laudes Creaturarum.*
[610] Cf. Asher, 1993, p.1058.
[611] *Fam.*, IV 1, 16.

The small plateau might be intended to refer back to the "via arcta" already mentioned.[612] However, I feel that the most salient point here is the fact that the concomitance between *ascesa* and *ascesi*, between a physical ascension and an ascetical elevation, is now mirrored in Petrarch's choice of verbs. As the ascetic climber, *ascendens*, scales the mountain, so too do his thoughts/worries *ascendunt* him. There is a parallel elevation of both body and soul taking place which he had already implicitly addressed. This very same elevation will now lead him to contemplate Italy.

> Primum omnium spiritu quodam aeris insolito et spectaculo liberiore permotus, stupenti[613] similis steti. Respicio: nubes erant sub pedibus; iamque michi minus incredibiles facti sunt Athos et Olimpus, dum quod de illis audieram et legeram, in minoris fame monte conspicio.[614]

Given the nature of the dominant metaphor, especially in the same paragraph beginning with clear allusions to the Father and the Son, the logical hypothesis to formulate now would be to see this "spiritu aeris" as the Holy Ghost. The interpretation would be that as the believer draws nearer and nearer to godhead, the pneumatic nature of the Holy Ghost becomes more rarefied and efficacious. In fact, the "spiritus" is "insolitus" and the "spectaculum" is freer of clouds, less obnubilated by the errors of vision. Petrarch well chooses the verb, *respicere*, for the errors are behind him. Now, finally, he can indeed *conspicere* - behold his vision.

> Dirigo dehinc oculorum radios ad partes italicas, quo magis inclinat animus; Alpes ipse rigentes ac nivose, per quas ferus ille quondam hostis romani nominis transivit, aceto, si fame credimus, saxa perrumpens, iuxta michi vise sunt, cum tamen magno distent intervallo.[615]

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[612] *ibid.*, 13.
[613] Cf. "obstupui fateor" in n. 701.
[614] *ibid.*, 17.

The clearer vision results in Petrarch's seeing Italy more clearly and in his feeling closer to it. Here too the result is greater consistency between body and soul. The telling expression "quo magis inclinat animus" is remarkably reminiscent of Petrarch's self-description as "animo romanus" in the meeting with the five Roman women on their way to Compostela.[616] Seeking Italy, that is, seeking out his own very special kind of *Romanitas*, in this very particular period of Petrarch's life (around 1353) is an integral part of seeking God.

> Suspiravi, fateor, ad italicum aerem animo potius quam oculis apparentem, atque inextimabilis me ardor invasit et amicum et patriam revidendi, ita tamen ut interim in utroque nondum virilis affectus mollitiem increparem, quamvis excusatio utrobique non deforet magnorum testium fulta presidio.[617]

The fact that Petrarch's seeking a certain type of *Romanitas* is somehow correlated with this search for God is encapsulated in a case of synaesthesia. The Italian air "appears" more to his spirit than to his eyes. That is, he "sees" with his spirit what Italy actually means in the climb. The climb itself spiritually brings him closer to Italy. Such spiritual vision continues the parallel between Petrarch and Philip, Ovid and now Hannibal. Just as the Adriatic Sea had initially kept Philip from invading Italy, the Alps now divide Petrarch from his fatherland. However, just as we had read the Livian and Ovidian accounts in this Roman key, perhaps we should delve somewhat more into this other Livian locus. Hannibal actually overcame the immense barrier of the Alps and took on the cowering *Romanitas*, in Italy. He uses vinegar to cut his way through. Used metaphorically already in classical Latin, *acetum* signified mordacity, incisiveness, firmness. These were the characteristics

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[615] *ibid.*, 18.
[616] *Fam.*, XVI 8, 2.
[617] *Fam.*, IV 1, 18.

which Petrarch still had to develop in order to move from Provence and fully take on his *Romanitas*.

The Augustinian paradigm

With the sentence, "Occupavit inde animum nova cogitatio atque a locis traduxit ad tempora",[618] Petrarch's *modus cogitandi* is decidedly locked into the idea of intrinsic transformation. First of all, we have just seen the instance of synaesthetic perception of the Italian air. Now the climb has moved, or better, translated his thoughts about the geographical location into thoughts concerning his past. Italy is the key to his inner self, his past, the *homo interior* into which he has long been peering.

> Dicebam enim ad me ipsum: - Hodie decimus annus completur, ex quo, puerilibus studiis dimissis, Bononia excessisti; et, o Deus immortalis, o immutabilis Sapientia, quot et quantas morum tuorum mutationes hoc medium tempus vidit! Infinita pretereo; nondum enim in portu sum, ut securus preteritarum meminerim procellarum. Tempus forsan veniet, quando eodem quo gesta sunt ordine universa percurram, prefatus illud Augustini tui: "Recordari volo transactas feditates meas et carnales corruptiones anime mee, non quod eas amem, sed ut amem te, Deus meus."[619]

The reference to Petrarch's youthful studies in Bologna comes only at the end of a series of lexical choices which had pre-empted it. We have seen these choices throughout the text, especially in his use of *compellare*, which had opened the metaphor of the climb in its anagogical sense. Petrarch had interrupted his youthful studies ten years beforehand. The emphasis given, however, to the adjective "youthful" in the phrase "puerilibus studiis dimissis" would suggest that Petrarch had gone on to *virilia studia* to which he had just alluded with "virilis affectus".[620] There is, however, a contradiction in terms. The term *puerilia studia* would

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[618] *ibid.*, 19.
[619] *ibid.*, 19-20. Cf. Aug., *conf.*, 2, 1, 1.
[620] *Fam.*, IV 1, 18.

normally refer to the *trivium* and *quadrivium* which one studied as an adolescent at school. At university one then studied the more 'virile' subjects which might lead to a profession. And yet Petrarch terms all such institutionalised subjects "puerilia". Only his current *studia* are worthy of being called "virilia". The ideal place for these, of course, is not at his desk in Bologna but, rather, on the road as a pilgrim.

The Augustinian quote, which prepares the reader for the direct reading from the *Confessions* soon afterwards, establishes a certain parallel between Petrarch and Augustine. "Recordari volo" is the incipit of the second book of the *Confessions*. Augustine wrote it when he was sixteen after having had to interrupt his studies for economic reasons. Petrarch, in 1336, was thirty-two years old, exactly twice that of Augustine, and he too had had to interrupt his studies for economic reasons.[621]

The parallel between Augustine and Petrarch forces us to look further into the text quoted. There are certain lexical syntagmata in common between Petrarch's *Familiaris* and Augustine's *Confessions* which are probably not casual. Augustine wants to remember his past obscenities and the carnal corruptions of his soul so that he may love God more and better. He does this out of love for God's love and:

> recolens vias meas nequissimas in amaritudine recogitationis meae, ut tu dulcescas mihi, dulcedo non fallax, dulcedo felix et secura, et colligens me a dispersione, in quae frustatim discissus sum, dum ab uno te aversus in multa evanui. Exarsi enim aliquando satiari inferis in adulescentia et silvescere ausus sum variis et umbrosis amoribus, et contabuit species mea et conputrui coram oculis tuis placens mihi et placere cupiens oculis hominum.

The two active present participles in Augustine, *recolens* and *colligens*, strongly suggest Petrarch's "ordine universa percurram" in the present *Familiaris*[622] where, of course, Petrarch's "universa" are his own Augustinian *feditates* and

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[621] 32 is also the age at which St Augustine read the passage in Romans which began his conversion. See Billanovich 1966, p.395 and O'Connell, 1983, p.513.
[622] *Fam.*, IV 1, 20.

corruptiones anime.[623] The Augustinian participles are even more closely mirrored in the explicit of the *Secretum* in the famous "Adero michi ipse quantum potero, et sparsa anime fragmenta recolligam". These 'scattered fragments of Petrarch's soul' refer to his singing of Laura, which he orders into a *Liber* now called his *Canzoniere* or the *Rerum Vulgarium fragmenta.*

Other lexical parallels with this Augustinian text are distributed in Petrarch's production of the time, especially in the *Secretum*, the *De otio*, the *Familiares* and, of course, the *Fragmenta*. For example, Augustine's "exarsi [...] aliquando satiari inferis" is mirrored in the *De otio* where Petrarch begins his philosophical and psychoanalytical descent *ad inferos.*[624] This descent is metaphorically represented in the Ventoux letter with Petrarch's seeking out the lower dales. Augustine's "silvescere ausus sum variis et umbrosis amoribus" will become here in Petrarch the *silvestres*, to whom Petrarch himself is associated with the senhal *Silvanus* and *Silvius*. It is here that Augustine uses the verbs *obnubilare* and *obfuscare*. These are obviously the clouds which Petrarch will find at his feet. More implicitly there will be an Augustinian paradigm in the climb, that is to say, the wound which the *pastor,* alias Virgil, had mentioned. Petrarch has not as yet come back to this point, but the pain and wounds which the climb inflicts are explained by Augustine in the same second chapter of the *Confessions*. Augustine writes: "Domine,[...], qui fingis dolorem in praecepto et percutis, ut sanes, et occidis nos, ne moriamur abs te."[625] During this intermission in his studies, Augustine had begun to "litteraturae atque oratoriae percipiendiae gratia peregrinari".[626] In this period, Augustine had

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[623] On this point, see Antonelli, 1992, p.412. Here Antonelli writes, "Ricostruire il proprio percorso biografico-culturale comportava dunque per Petrarca, necessariamente, ripensare dal proprio punto di vista anche il percorso della lirica volgare precedente e quindi, innanzitutto, la rappresentazione della donna."

[624] *De otio*, p.628.

[625] *conf.*, 2, 2, 4.

[626] *conf.*, 2, 3, 5. The idea of pilgrimage towards knowledge is repeated below in the same Augustinian text, "Madauris, in qua vicina urbe iam coeperam litteraturae atque oratoriae percipiendae gratia

seemingly wandered away from God, he had erred as a pilgrim.[627] Petrarch too is on a pilgrimage towards a greater understanding of rhetorical skills and the value of the written word in an unorthodox fashion.

Another surprising parallel is the choice of addressee. Augustine himself did not know to whom exactly he was telling these things. This brings us back to the question of Petrarch's ideal reader. If Dionigi da Borgo San Sepolcro was not alive to be able to read this letter, who was the letter for? Again, the recourse to Augustine helps the modern reader out. Augustine writes;

> Cui narro haec? Neque enim tibi, Deus meus, sed apud te narro haec generi meo, generi humano, quantulacumque ex particula incidere potest in istas meas litteras.[628]

Petrarch follows Augustine in writing his letter as if Dionigi could read it, but for the benefit of "his own kind", humanity. This is, after all, the explicit idea behind Petrarch's *Posteritati*.[629]

Augustine continues:

> Et ut quid hoc? Ut videlicet ego et quisquis haec legit cogitemus, de quam profundo clamandum sit ad te. Et quid propius auribus tuis, si cor confitens et vita ex fide est?[630]

This mystical-lyrical stance in Augustine is, perhaps, reflected in Petrarch's Ventoux letter by the distance that separates Petrarch from the Alps. By climbing Petrarch seems actually closer to what divides him from Italy, despite the immense space in between. He has understood how profoundly he must *clamare* to God.

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peregrinari, longinquioris apud Carthaginem **peregrinationis** sumptus..."; "**peregrinanti** studiorum causa".

[627] *ibid.*, 2, 10, 18, "Defluxi abs te ego et erravi, Deus meus".

[628] *ibid.*, 2, 3, 5.

[629] *Post.*, 1, "Fuerit tibi forsan de me aliquid auditum; quanquam et hoc dubium sit: an exiguum et obscurum longe nomen seu locorum seu temporum perventurum sit".

[630] *conf.*, 2, 3, 5.

This calling out to God is achieved by Petrarch through his *studium*. The second book of the *Confessions* has also much to say about this particular *studium*. It also forces the ideal reader to address yet another important aspect of the climb which had, however, already been delineated in the form of the dichotomy *otium – negotium*. Gherardo had rushed up the first hill only to stretch out and take a nap. Not only does Gherardo not contemplate beforehand the climb from the point of view of any characteristic whatsoever, but he does not do so afterwards either. Gherardo does not intrinsically gain from the climb. Gherardo sleeps. Gherardo is *otiosus*. Petrarch, on the other hand, as we have already seen, had a difficult time getting up the first hill. He found it extremely arduous to take on the steep climbs and thus found himself in the lower dales until he was so derided by his brother that he had decided to stop in one such low lying valley. This we had already recognised as a *locus amoenus*, the ideal place for a theophany and, consequently, for theosophical reflection. This arduous climb for Petrarch engenders an elevation in the order of analysis of his human plight, a gnoseological shift which will profoundly (*profundo*) affect his literary production. In the *Confessions*, within the context of the example of stealing pears, Augustine had also introduced the concept of *negotium*. Augustine quotes Sallust's "Ne per otium torpesceret manus aut animus".[631] Though used in a negative context in Augustine, for Petrarch the concept becomes extremely positive and central to this own theory concerning *studium*. In the coeval *De vita solitaria* and *De otio religioso*, Petrarch warns against too much *otium*. The destruction of Carthage paradoxically became deleterious for Rome in the long term as it allowed "securitas, otium et quies" to destroy "rei bellice disciplina et imperii Gloria".[632] Lot remained virtuous for as

[631] Sall., *Cat.* 16, 3 in *conf.*, 2, 5, 11.
[632] *De vita sol.*, 2, 10, p.486.

long as he remained in Sodom.[633] The Ventoux letter is fully in line, therefore, with one of the fundamental contentions of the *De otio*: "Nam virtus in infirmitate perficitur".[634] Only in *infirmitas* may one reach *Sapientia.*

This nature of *studium* is underlined by Augustine in the same context of the *Confessions* quoted above.[635] Augustine's mother, Monica, had wanted to send him to Carthage to study a regular course of *doctrina* because she thought it would both enhance the young Augustine's education and bring him closer to God.[636]

Petrarch continues his description of the climb of Mt Ventoux with a consideration on the nature of love.[637] The beginning of this consideration, however, places the emphasis on the *negotium* of dealing with such a concept. *Negotium* (*nec – otium*) is the opposite of Gherardo's *otium* in *De otio religioso.* Petrarch's consideration is the opposite, therefore, of Gherardo's activities within the Carthusian cloister. This *negotium* takes on the form of a psychological battle. The battle is a Prudentius-style *Psychomachia.* It is not, however, between Christian faith and pagan cult. It is, rather, between inner sincerity and the linguistic-rhetorical capacity to communicate such sincerity.

The measure of the climb is now gauged in earthly terms by how much Petrarch can see. In order to see, however, it is necessary to stop climbing and turn around. This action is represented three times in the space of one sentence, "respicerem, [...] verto me in tergum, [...] respiciens". Petrarch's unusual insistence on this facet cannot be casual. We saw in the first chapter that the idea of turning in order to understand is sapiential, thanks to the "salutifer sal".[638] Now

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[633] *De vita sol.*, 2, 10, p.486.
[634] *Cor.* 2, 12, 9, cit. in *De otio*, p.614.
[635] See p. 164, n. 631.
[636] *conf.*, 2, 3, 8, "illa [*scil.* Augustine's mother] autem, quia non solum nullo detrimento, sed etiam nonnullo adiumento ad te [*scil.* God] adipiscendum futura existimabat usitata illa studia doctrinae".
[637] *Fam.*, IV 1, 21-24.
[638] *De otio*, p.808, "Statua salis, in quam mulier retro respiciens versa est, animas vestras salutifero sale condiverit".

Petrarch's looking back, or "respicere", concerns the area of Provence and beyond. He cannot see quite as far as the Pyrenees, but can cast his glance right into the centre of France, practically as far as Lyon. To his left he sees Marseilles and Aigue Mortes. The Rhone flows directly below him. By consulting any map of the area, it is possible to see that Petrarch has summarised his vision of the France in which he had lived by its boundaries. The cities of his carefree youth within these boundaries, however, are missing, such as Carpentras and Montpellier. If he could plainly see the Rhone, then obviously Avignon, the most conspicuous absentee, must also have been clearly visible. He has chosen, however, not to mention it. The last toponym he chooses to mention is *Aquae Mortuae*. His catalogue ends, therefore, with an allusion to stagnation and death (again, a *cogitatio mortis* as in the *De otio*) which is flogged (*verberat*) by the waters of the Mediterranean.

The idea of death, the natural closing of a life, is also propounded by another unusual insistence upon one particular concept. Petrarch alludes to the setting of the sun, the closing of a day or life cycle, in four different ways. It is time to go (*tempus abeundi*). The climb has already effectively drawn to a close. After the quote from Augustine, the party will begin the descent. The sun was already yielding (*inclinaret iam sol*) and the evening shadows were coming down from the hills (*umbra montis excresceret*). The atmosphere evoked is strikingly similar to that of Virgil's first *Eclogue*: "et iam summa procul villarum culmina fumant / maioresque cadunt altis de montibus umbrae". The possible paraphrase of Virgil would also underline the idea of finiteness and narrative closure, as the two lines constitute the explicit of the Virgilian eclogue in question. The fourth allusion is the fact that Petrarch is looking back to the west, "ad occidentem". Occident is the area in which the sun dies. It derives from the verb *occido*, meaning to fall down, to die, to set. There might be an intertextual allusion to Dante (*If.* 1, 60; "[*scil.* la lupa] mi

ripigneva là dove 'l sol tace"), especially in the consequent appearance of "chi per lungo silenzio parea fioco",[639] in whom we might recognise either the Dantean Virgil or the Petrarchan Augustine about to re-appear in the reading from the *Confessions*. However, it is this poignant moment that Petrarch is looking down at the things destined shortly to die. It is a farewell to the sweet Provence in which he had spent his youth. It is not, therefore, his future, as O'Connell has striven to underline,[640] but his past. I shall come back shortly to the above-mentioned list and the intrinsic idea of death and closure when considering the Augustinian quote.

Petrarch calls upon God and him who was present (*ipsumque qui aderat*) as witnesses for the veracity of his chance reading of the *Confessions*. O'Connell has pointed out that most translators have taken "qui aderat" simply as Gherardo. The American scholar argues, instead, for Augustine as "he who was present" both in Petrarch's mind and, indeed, in the physical, constant presence of Petrarch's pocket edition of the *Confessions*. O'Connell excludes Gherardo from the benefit of the *sortes* even before Petrarch does. He propounds, instead, for an Augustine "guarantor of the truth of the experience". No matter how suggestive, I feel that "ipsum" must refer back to "Frater" both for a question of logic in Latin grammar and because Gherardo's exclusion from the benefit of the *sortes* will become important exactly in the way Petrarch achieves it. I shall examine this exclusion later. For the moment, I do concede, however, that perhaps on some higher, parallel level, the "qui aderat" might be interpreted as Augustine, or better, Petrarch's ideal reader. If we want to thoroughly respect the Augustinian model, perhaps, we should think, rather, of Augustine's previously mentioned "Cui narro haec?", that is, of posterity, humanity, "those few who might want to read me until here".[641] In this

[639] *If.* 1, 63. Even though in the Dantean locus it is morning, whereas here it is dusk. See also n.575.
[640] O'Connell, 1983, p.513.
[641] Aug. *conf.*, 2, 3, 5.

direction, we may make a parallel between *The Ventoux letter* and the *Secretum*, where Petrarch has a silent third party verify the truth of the *altercatio*. This third party is *Veritas* and, ultimately, the ideal reader.[642] Robbins has suggested that the ideal reader is Petrarch himself who, in the *sortes augustinianae*, "reads himself being read" in a specular, all-absorbing relationship between himself and the text.[643] Our mind is instantly drawn to Petrarch's line "intendami chi po', ch'i' m'intend'io".[644] The "qui aderat" question, however, is pure speculation.

It is in the west-looking stance that it suddenly occurs to Petrarch that it would be appropriate to read Augustine's *Confessions*. The wording in Petrarch's text is illuminating. Now that Petrarch has climbed Mt Ventoux and is, therefore, more capable of *seeing*, Augustine's book *appears* (*visus est*) to him, even though he had always had it with him. The emphasis is unequivocally on correct vision, as we saw in the *De otio*. Now Petrarch is truly capable of getting the most benefit possible from a reading of St Augustine. He is capable of truly looking into (*inspicere*) the text.

A Franciscan completion of the Augustinian paradigm

In 1973 Anthony Cutler hypothesised that Petrarch knew some of the Lives of St Francis and thus decided to write a chapter on the saint in the *De vita solitaria*.[645] Cutler then drew a parallel between Petrarch's climb of Mt Ventoux and St Francis's climb of La Verna. As I shall demonstrate below, I believe this parallel to be founded. What I do not accept is Cutler's appraisal of the Franciscan elements. Cutler limited his analysis to rather vague similarities in metaphysical significance

[642] *Secr.*, 3, 212, "Huic autem quas referam grates, que, multiloquio non gravata, usque nos ad exitum expectavit? Que si usquam faciem avertisset, operti tenebris per devia vagaremur, solidumque nichil vel tua contineret oratio, vel intellectus meus exciperet".
[643] Robbins, 1985, p.539.
[644] *RVF*, 105, 17.

and yet he excluded the possibility that Petrarch's letter might have an allegorical interpretation.[646] Cutler based many of his parallels between St Francis and Petrarch on the *Fioretti*, which reach their final form only in the fifteenth century. Because of their overt popular origins, often based on tales passed around through word of mouth for generations, the *Fioretti* are also far from being considered a sound historical source. Cutler also accepted the standard positions of the critics concerning Petrarch's relationship with his brother, Gherardo, "his companion of the mountain [who] became a Carthusian, an act the poet admired and warmly approved".[647] I believe that any such important parallel should be achieved on the basis of texts available to Petrarch. One such text is St Bonaventure's *Legenda maior* from which Petrarch seems to have extrapolated the idea for his own *sortes apostolorum*.

It is the episode containing the *sortes* that the Augustinian paradigm characterising the *Familiares* and the motif of confession is most evident. It is also here, however, that the Augustianian paradigm is challenged. That is to say, because of Petrarch's reading of Augustine, his supposed conversion at the top of Mt Ventoux is held by most critics to be 'obviously Augustinian'. I also believe this to be true, but only on the general level of confessional literature. Modern critics have never wondered why this supposedly Augustinian-style conversion does not end as Augustine's own conversion ended. That is, if the couple Petrarch-Gherardo at the summit of Mt Ventoux is to be understood as a specular image of the couple Augustine-Alypius in the Milanese garden, why is it that Gherardo does not become involved in his brother's conversion just as Alypius does in Augustine's? St Augustine writes in Book VIII of the *Confessions*, "codicem clausi, et tranquillo

[645] Cutler, 1973, p.51.
[646] *ibid.*, p.53.
[647] *ibid.*, p.59.

iam vultu indicavi Alypio [...]. Petit videre quid legissem: ostendi."[648] Petrarch, in turn, also writes, "librum clausi". Not only, however, does Petrarch not "ostendit", but nor does he tell Gherardo anything about his own Augustinian revelation. Gherardo is even described as "molestus"! Petrarch does not involve Gherardo in his reading of Augustine and then closes the book in his face! If the chance reading of St Paul leads to both Augustine's and Alypius's baptism, then why does the strenuous climbing of Mt Ventoux not engender an analogous baptism in Petrarch and Gherardo? My interpretation of the *sortes* and the hypothesis of an influence of St Bonaventure's *Legenda maior* on Petrarch's narration of his own climb of Mt Ventoux aim to explain why the Augustinian paradigm alone is not sufficient for a modern understanding of both the Mt Ventoux letter and the destiny of the two Petracchi brothers.

Let us, therefore, return to the key issue causing both the breakdown between Franciscus and Augustinus in the *Secretum* and, on another level, the exclusion of Francesco from Gherardo's cloister. Let us, that is, return to the hendiadys, *amor et gloria*, or, in a word, Laura.

In the Mt Ventoux letter, the function of the Ovidian quote (Odero, si potero; si non, invitus amabo)[649] is to recall the full strength of Ovid's battle in Petrarch's own psychomachy as it is developed throughout the *Secretum* and the *RVF*. In common there is the tug-of-war between what Ovid calls *amor* and *odium*.[650] Petrarch's love-hate relationship refers to Laura and everything she stands for. In the Mt Ventoux letter, Petrarch writes that he has been immersed in this thought for the last ten years, "Sic per exactum decennium cogitatione volvebar".[651] Petrarch dates the letter in the eschatocollon with *VI Kal. Maias, Malausane*. If we

[648] *conf.* 8, 12, 30.
[649] Ovid *amor.*, 3, 12, 3.
[650] *amor.* 3, 11, 35-54.

count backwards in classical style, that is, considering the current year as the first, then the *decennium* had started in the April of 1327. On 6 April of the same year, the famous *feria sexta aprilis*, Petrarch had supposedly first seen Laura in the Franciscan Church of St Clare in Avignon. We know, however, that in 1327 Easter fell not on 6 April, but on 12 April. The meeting with Laura took place, therefore, on Easter Monday, that is, the day after Palm Sunday. We can conclude, therefore, that Petrarch's having abandoned his above-mentioned[652] *puerilia studia* ten years beforehand means that his *studia virilia* coincide with his ten-year "nova cogitatio"[653] on the Lauran entity as a Franciscan fiction based on Easter-time theophany.[654]

The dating of the Mt Ventoux letter is also dictated by a similar narrative programme. The *VI Kal. Maias* indicates that the climb supposedly took place in the three-day period from Wednesday 24 April to Friday 26 April, 1336, that is, in the fourth week after Easter. The connection, therefore, between Petrarch's first meeting with Laura and his climb of Mt Ventoux is the Easter period, the death and resurrection of the Lord. More specifically, however, in the *Breviarium Romanum*, Wednesday 24 April is rather significantly designated as the *Feria* VI. That is, despite the discrepancy in the dates for Easter, Petrarch has climbed Mt Ventoux on another *Feria* VI exactly ten years after having seen Laura for the first time in the Franciscan Church of St Clare in Avignon.

This *Breviarium* is also Franciscan. Despite this, it would have been read that day both by Gherardo (a Carthusian) and Dionigi da Borgo Sansepolcro (an Augustinian). This fact is highly illuminating for an interpretation of the Ventoux

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[651] *Fam.*, IV 1, 23.
[652] See p. 160, n.620.
[653] See n. 618.
[654] On the Franciscan characteristics of Laura, her Franciscan death, and Petrarch's desire to reflect this Franciscan death in his *Testamentum*, (ie. his own desire to be buried *in loco Fratrum Minorum*),

letter inasmuch as the *Breviarium* extrapolates from the Scriptures a particular reading for 24 April, the day of Petrarch's supposed climb of Mt Ventoux, which can be used to describe Petrarch's *animus* in the climb. The *Breviarium* on this day is dedicated to the reading of the *Apocalypse* 5, 1-14. The emphasis of this reading falls on a book to be opened by someone *worthy* enough to do so. John the Evangelist writes,

> Et vidi in dextera sedentis supra thronum, librum scriptum intus et foris, signatum sigillis septem. Et vidi Angelum fortem, praedicantem voce magna: **Quis est dignus aperire librum, et solvere signacula eius?** Et nemo poterat neque in caelo, neque in terra, neque subtus terram aperire librum, neque respicere illum. Et ego flebam multum, quondam nemo dignus inventus est aperire librum, nec videre eum.

John then writes that the only person truly worthy of opening the book is the Lamb, "Dignus es, Domine, accipere librum, et aperire signacula eius". It is only the Lamb who can thus acquire *Sapientia*. That is, "Dignus est Agnus, qui occisus est, accipere virtutem, et divinitatem, et sapientiam, et fortitudinem, et honorem, et gloriam, et benedictionem". Furthermore, the first *lectio* of the *Feria* VI dedicated to the *Apocalypse* ends with a climb of a mountain. That is, once the Lamb has opened the Book, and a "templum tabernaculi testimonii" has been opened in the sky,[655] an angel shows John the new bride of the Lamb, Jerusalem, descending from Heaven. It is now that John writes, "Et sustulit me in spiritu in montem magnum et altum. Et vidi".[656]

It would seem, therefore, that Petrarch dates his climb to fit it in with his daily *lectiones*, and, more importantly, the fictional date of his first sight of Laura, all of which in a Franciscan setting.[657] Indeed, it is only after Petrarch has been spiritually taken (subveherem) "ad altiora", like John's "sustulit me", that Petrarch

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see Lokaj 2000f.
[655] *Apoc.* 15, 5.
[656] *ibid.*, 21, 10.

answers the Angel's question, "Quis est dignus aperire librum, et solvere signacula eius?" That is, Petrarch simply writes, "Aperio, lecturus quicquid occurreret".[658] Obviously, Petrarch thinks that *he* is worthy of opening the book. The implicit consequence here is twofold, inasmuch as it implies that Petrarch is on the same literary-semiological level as the Lamb (which reinforces his *imitatio Christi*), and that he thinks that Gherardo is obviously *not* worthy of opening the book. Just as John is then carried up to a great, high mountain where "he saw", it is after his reading of St Augustine that Petrarch exclaims, "cacumen montis aspexi!"[659]

The Franciscan nature of the Mt Ventoux letter is concealed throughout. Petrarch claims, for example, to have lived near Mount Ventoux "ab infantia" and that this mountain was always visible. This, however, is only partly true. Petrarch was born in Arezzo in 1304. Petrarch's father, ser Petracco, moves his family from Arezzo to Pisa in 1311 and from here to Carpentras in 1312 where they stayed for the following five years. In 1316 Petrarch would then begin studying civil law in Montpellier.[660] That is to say that Petrarch was already approximately eight years old when he could first see Mount Ventoux on the horizon from his new home in Carpentras. His infancy *stricto sensu*, that is, the period in which he as a baby had not as yet learnt to speak, was already over.[661] He, therefore, had not known this mountain at all "ab infantia". Perhaps Dionigi da Borgo San Sepolcro or the ideal reader was expected to know exactly to what mountain or to what type of symbol he was referring. Between Arezzo and the town of this Augustinian bible scholar there is a mountain which Petrarch *had* known ever since his infancy, which was

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[657] For more on the Franciscan reading of Petrarch's love paradigm, cf. Lokaj 2000f.
[658] *Fam.*, IV 1, 26.
[659] *ibid.*, 33.
[660] Wilkins, 1964, pp.14-18.
[661] *Infantia* derives from *fari* = to speak. Therefore, infancy is the period in which this faculty of speech has not as yet been developed. For *infantia* = general incapability of speech, even in adulthood, see Petrarch's paraphrase, "Sic iam sola philosophantis infantia et perplexa balbuties" of Cic. *De orat.*, 2, 33, 144 in *De ign.* p.1032.

extremely famous in the area and, indeed, beyond. This was La Verna, the mountain which St Francis had climbed to receive the stigmata. Petrarch's "lie", therefore, establishes a parallel between the Petrarchan mountain, Mount Ventoux, and the Franciscan mountain *par excellence*, La Verna.

If it is plausible to hypothesise a parallel between St Francis of Assisi and Francis Petrarch, then the conclusion is religious as much as it is political. Seeing that most other biographies had been burnt, Bonaventure's *Legenda maior* was the only one on the life of St Francis which Petrarch would have officially been able to consult.[662] It is to this *Legenda*, therefore, that I shall look for intertextual and ideological allusions.

The Bonaventurian compromise to blend the joachimitic-spiritual accounts of Francis's conversion had created an account whereby the Saint had only "heard" one particular book, the Gospel according to Matthew.[663] The traditional consultation of the *sortes apostolorum* consisted in opening up the Bible three times, as St Francis then does on La Verna.[664] In consulting his particular 'gospel', the *Confessions*, only once, Petrarch's account is more like the Bonaventurian compromise in the church of San Nicolò.[665] Just like St Francis, Petrarch accepts the first page he opens up to.

The parallel becomes even more plausible when we consider the fact that the passage which St Francis hears is from Matthew 10, and the passage which Petrarch reads to himself is from *Confessions* 10. If we also consider that 10 is the number of the Virgin, a tradition to which Petrarch subscribed, we might also say that, in

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[662] The earlier biographies had been saved in Cistercian monasteries.

[663] Bonaventure actually relies heavily on Thomas of Celano's *Vita prima*. Cf. I Cel. 22, 1 Cel. 93.

[664] *Leg. maior* 13, 2, "Sane cum in **trina libri apertione** Domini passio semper occurreret, intellexit vir Deo plenus, quod sicut Christum fuerat imitatus in actibus vitae, sic conformis ei esse deberet in afflictionibus et doloribus passionis, antequam ex hoc mundo transiret".

[665] By 'Bonaventurian compromise' I refer to *Leg. maior* 3, 1 where the traditional *three* different openings of the *sortes* is present in the *one* hearing by St Francis of the *forma vitae.*

mediaeval terms, the parallel takes places under the sign of the Virgin (in the Bonaventurian *Legenda* St Francis had heard about his *forma vitae* in a Church dedicated to the Virgin).[666]

Bonaventure justifies St Francis's use of the technique of the *sortes apostolorum* through the saint's devotion to the Holy Trinity. Such justification takes place only twice throughout the entire *Legenda maior*: when St Francis discovers his *forma vitae*, and during his meditation on the Passion of Christ on La Verna in preparation for the stigmatisation. These are respectively the third and thirteenth chapters of the *Legenda maior.* This biography consists of fifteen chapters. This means that the only two mentions of the *sortes* are placed perfectly symmetrically throughout the structure of the biography. This second mention, as we have said, takes place on La Verna. St Francis climbs a mountain, uses the *sortes apostolorum* and through a seraphic theophany receives the stigmata. Seeing that this is strikingly similar to the account Petrarch has given of the climbing of his own mountain, let us rapidly schematise the thirteenth chapter of St Bonaventure's *Legenda maior* to verify the validity of the parallel.[667]

St Bonaventure opens the account with a description of St Francis who was never idle (*numquam **otiari** a bono*) climbing up and down the ladder of Jacob. St Francis would climb towards God inasmuch as he descended towards his fellow man. Spiritual ascent means human descent. In dividing his time between apostolic

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[666] Marian texts, with the relative appeal to God inserted in the preceding poems, concluded numerous thirteenth-century Provençal and Catalan canzonieros, many of which were indeed explicitly profane, almost vulgar, eg. the canzoniere written by Guiraut Riquiez. The tradition in question seems to have been started by Alfonso X, King of Castile, who had written the *Cantigas de S. Maria* in Galician-Portuguese articulated on the basis of the number ten. Just as this language was to become *the* only possible language in which to write religious verse in Alfonsian Spain, so too did this number 10 become known as the Marian number *par excellence*, whence the ten strophes in the Marian song in provençal by the Genoese troubadour, Lanfranc Cigala in the "*Leys d'amare*" and in Petrarch's *Canzone alla Vergine*; see Di Girolamo, 1989, pp.221 & 226, and Sturm-Maddox, 1992, p.224; for these and other numerological considerations regarding Petrarch's 366th poetic compostion in the *RVF*, see Caputo, 1987, pp.12, 161-165, Perugi 1991, p.834 and Santagata, 1996, p.1402.

[667] In order to better understand St Francis's stigmatisation, Bonaventure had also climbed Mount

missions and solitary contemplation, St Francis effectively banishes the traditional distinction between *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa*. It is this fusion which prepares St Francis for the stigmatisation.

Petrarch may have read the first line of the Bonaventurian account as alluding to Gherardo's *otiositas* within the mighty walls of *Cartusia*. Mazzotta, as we saw above in the chapter on the *De otio*,[668] explains the dichotomy established between Petrarch and Gherardo as the traditional contrast between the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa*, which respectively cultivate *negotium* and *otium*.[669] My reading of both the *De otio religioso* and the Ventoux letter is, however, diametrically opposed to this interpretation. In the above-mentioned Senecan tradition of *contemplatio* and *actio* combined,[670] Bonaventure describes St Francis as oscillating *between* the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa* when he writes, "ut aliud proximorum lucris laboriosis impenderet, aliud contemplationis tranquillis excessibus dedicaret". The semantic value and mirroring syntax in Bonaventure's "aliud [...] aliud", may, in fact, have suggested Petrarch's, "**nunc** terrenum aliquid saperem, **nunc** exemplo corporis animum ad altiora subveherem".[671] The emphasis, therefore, is on Francis's own prowess to soar into the lofty heights of heavenly contemplation - "Ferebatur quidem in altum". Petrarch, who is hardly a saint, does not carry himself on high but gets his *ingenium* to give his *animus* a shoulder up to heaven. The model adduced by Petrarch would seem to have a Franciscan matrix: the spirit is raised following the body's example. Though obviously on a higher plane, spiritual knowledge occurs only in analogy with and subordinate to earthly knowledge.

Alverna, thus producing the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*. For a brief discussion of the possible influence of the *Itinerarium* on Petrarch's 'Franciscan' mountaineering, see Lokaj 2000f.

668 See p.10, n.32.

669 Mazzotta, 1993, pp.158-159.

670 Sen., *Ad Serenum de otio*, 5, 8 cit. on p. 35, n.112.

In my previous discussion of Petrarch's *modus peregrinandi,* which one ought to adopt in the climbing of Mt Ventoux, we already saw a parallel with the ladder of Jacob in Genesis. Such a chain of hills around Mt Ventoux obviously symbolised particular difficulties to overcome, or particular lessons to learn. This is in line with the *labores multimodi* which St Francis had overcome before his stigmatisation. The *labores* are the rungs of the ladder to heaven.

Once St Francis had tried to bring others towards salvation, he would leave the din of the crowds and search out the hidden retreats of solitude and his peace (*solitudinis secreta petebat locumque quietis*). It was here, in such "secret places", that St Francis would be able to more freely dedicate himself to God (*quo liberius Domino* ***vacans***). The parallel I am suggesting with Petrarch concerns the *Secretum* III. Here Petrarch reflects on Virgil and suddenly realises and explains to Augustinus that his own "peregrinationum rusticationumque [...] finis" is "libertas", which is very close to the Franciscan comparative adverb *liberius* and the present participle *vacans.* That is to say, in Petrarch's fleeing from the company of others into the woods of Vaucluse, that is, in oscillating between *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa*, there might be, together naturally with his Senecan-style *otium litteratum*, a Franciscan suggestion.

It is here, in fact, that Petrarch might have seen a valuable lesson to be learned for Gherardo. In the *De otio religioso* Petrarch wants to comment on a text from the *Psalms*[672] - ***vacate*** *et videte quoniam ego sum Deus*. The aim and the conclusion of the *De otio* suggest that Petrarch felt that the Carthusian monks of Montrieux did not have a sufficiently healthy idea of *vacatio*. Perhaps Petrarch thought that the Carthusians could well afford to look to the Franciscan model of *vacatio* to learn about his own multi-faceted concept of *otium* and *studium*.

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[671] *Fam.*, IV 1, 26.

Two years before St Francis died, divine Providence took him aside and brought him to a high mountain called La Verna. The ultimate archetypal motif within the Bible of climbing to "see" better and receive a new *forma vitae* is *Exodus* 20. Here Moses climbs Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments from God who then orders him to descend towards his people. In glossing the Franciscan ascent of La Verna, however, commentators usually refer to the episode of Christ's transformation on Mt Tabor. Matthew writes: "Et post dies sex assumit Iesus Petrum et Iacobum et Iohannem fratrem eius, et **ducit** illos in montem excelsum seorsum, et transfiguratus est ante eos".[673] Indeed, the Bonaventurian account is similar: " post labores multimodos **perductus** est in locum excelsum seorsum, qui dicitur Mons Alvernae". The Petrarchan account, at the incipit of The Ventoux letter, reads: "Altissimum regionis huius montem, quem non immerito Ventosum vocant, hodierno die, sola videndi insignem loci altitudinem cupiditate **ductus**, ascendi". Let us now analyse together these three passages.

The most obvious element in common with all three accounts is the verb *ducere*. Whereas Christ "ducit", St Francis is "perductus" and Petrarch is "ductus". It would follow that Petrarch was "led" to Mt Ventoux just as St Francis had been "led" to La Verna. If we consider Petrarch's explicit reason of his coming to Mt Ventoux as a litotes or a gross understatement, or perhaps even as a disguised desire to measure for himself the greatness of God, it would also follow that the leader or *dux* in both mediaeval accounts was Christ himself. Francis Petrarch and St Francis of Assisi are the chosen ones of Christ.

An element common to Matthew and Bonaventure, but not to Petrarch, is the adverb *seorsum*, meaning "separately", "apart". Hence, the Jerusalem Bible translates it with "where they could be alone" and Olgiati (Olgiati, 1990, p.945)

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[672] *Ps.*, 46 (45),11.

translates it with "trasse in disparte". If Petrarch had been using the biblical and Bonaventurian episodes at hand, his omission might have been based on the fact that *seorsum* does not appear in Caesar, Virgil or Horace. That is, Petrarch might have felt it to be anti-classical. The question deserves, however, some further inquiry. Peter, James and John had been selected from amongst the twelve apostles to witness Christ's transfiguration. There were four men on Mt Tabor. When St Bonaventure mirrors this episode, he also introduces other companions selected from amongst the fratres (aliquos ex fratribus).[674] Bonaventure does not specify the exact number. He only mentions a certain friar Illuminatus whom Thomas of Celano had not mentioned. Indeed this Illuminatus might be the Bonaventurian substitution of Thomas's account of friar Leo who asked St Francis for an autograph on La Verna.[675] *I Fioretti*, in turn, will explicitly mention other friars as "alquanti frati più suoi domestichi". These were Illuminato, Leone, Masseo and Agnolo.[676] *I Fioretti* obviously wanted to reconcile the older Celanese version with the official Bonaventurian model.

The role of Illuminato becomes, in fact, the key to our understanding of Petrarch's omission of *seorsum*. Illuminato was still living when Bonaventure recorded his version in Assisi. Bonaventure finds that this version actuallysolves the problem of the veracity of the stigmata. In his *Tractatus de miraculis*,[677] Thomas of Celano states that St Francis, *homo novus*, was made famous by a singular privilege never before bestowed on mortal man – the stigmata. Since Christ himself, no one else had ever been stigmatised. The problem arose because, between the supposed stigmatisation on La Verna in 1224 and St Francis's death in 1226, no mention had

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673 *Mt.*, 17, 1-2.
674 *San Bonaventura Leg. Maior*, 13, 4, Città Nuova, p.328.
675 Thomas of Celano, *Vita secunda*, 20 in *Fonti Franc.*, p.594.
676 *I Fioretti di san Francesco* in *Fonti Franc.*, pp.1599-1600.
677 *Trac. de mirac.* II in *Fonti Franc.*, p.738.

been made at all of the stigmata. They would only be discovered at his death in the night between 3 and 4 September, 1226. Friar Elijah, the then General of the Order, wrote in his encyclical epistle sent to all the provinces of the Order on the death of St Francis:

> Et his dictis, annuntio vobis gaudium magnum et miraculi novitatem. A saeculo non est auditum tale signum, praeterquam in Filio Dei, qui est Christus Dominus. Non diu ante mortem frater et pater noster apparuit crucifixus, quinque plagas, quae vere sunt stigmata Christi, portans in corpore suo[678]

Friar Elijah himself seems to ignore when and where St Francis had been stigmatised. Greater details will come to the fore only later on, especially in the official biographies starting with the *Vita prima* and the *Tractatus de miraculis* by Thomas of Celano. Once established that St Francis had received the stigmata in 1224 on La Verna, the problem remained as to why the saint had not spoken about them. Many, in fact, did not believe in such a miracle. Some thought that the supposed stigmata were only five of the sores produced by a serious case of scabies.[679] On the other hand, other groups, especially the Dominicans, were envious of the stigmata and, therefore, exceedingly skeptical.[680] Much effort was subsequently expended by the official Franciscan biographers to promulgate the veracity of the miracle. The earliest justification of St Francis's silence was that others had not seen the stigmata because they were not *worthy* enough to see them. (Concerning such worthiness, we might think back to John's question, "*Quis est dignus aperire librum, et solvere signacula eius*?")[681] Certain companions were found, however, such as Rufinus, Pacificus and Leo, who now remembered having

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[678] Helias Cortonensis *Epistola encyclica de transitu,* in *Fontes Franc.,* p.254.
[679] *Legenda Monacensis*, LXXX, cit, in Frugoni, 1993, pp.60 & 91.
[680] Frugoni (Frugoni, 1993, pp.217-221) explains the stigmata received by St Caterina as an invention brought about through the "invidia delle stimmate" in Dominican circles.
[681] *Apoc.*, 5, 1-14, see p.172.

seen the stigmata by chance while serving St Francis alive.[682] Later on, Thomas of Eccleston was to state in his chronicles that "many in the world doubted."[683] Skepticism was destined to remain both within and without the order. The case of St Francis's stigmata is still the centre of debate today.[684] Recently it has been suggested that the stigmata had been "invented", that is, that St Francis had not spoken about them because they simply did not exist.[685]

The case of the stigmata was also polemical, therefore, regarding other forms of religious life. Indeed, Franciscanism became so popular because it satisfied the ascetical desires in thirteenth-century society, and especially in the poorer classes, which traditional monasticism did not cater for. The mendicant Franciscans diffused a new type of devotion centred upon the meditation on Christ's life and sufferings. The stigmatised St Francis, ennobled through both the Bonaventurian *Legenda* and Giotto's brush, constituted an explosive revolution, a model to emulate.[686] When Elijah discovers St Francis's wounds, whether they were nothing else but a degeneration of the skin due to a severe case of scabies or, indeed, even self-inflicted, he did not hesitate to define them as miraculous, an *imitatio Christi*. Elijah and the biographers successfully managed to placate the memory of the discouraged founder and transform his physical torments into a privilege accorded by God.[687]

The "unworthiness" of the world was not strong enough an explanation to sweep away all doubt and impose the miracle of the stigmata as true. Here St Bonaventure, *Doctor Seraphicus*, elaborates a theory around St Francis's silence

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[682] *Tract. de mirac.*, 2, 4; *Cron.*, 5, 2; *Vita sec.* 99, 100; Thomas of Eccleston, *Conv.*, 13, ,91-2; Salimbene de Adam, *Cron.*, 2, 10.
[683] Thomas of Eccleston, *Conv.*, 13, 91.
[684] Frugoni, pp.23 & 33.
[685] *ibid.*, *passim*.
[686] *ibid.*, pp.53-55.
[687] *ibid.*, pp.82-83.

which enters into the realm of true mysticism. St Francis is *perductus* to La Verna to seek out "solitudinis secreta locumque quietis". Here he is stigmatised on his own (*seorsum*). He is then assailed by a doubt whether to tell others about the secret of the Lord or to remain quiet (*diceret, vel taceret*).[688] At this point St Bonaventure introduces friar Illuminatus who truly illumines the doubtful Francis. Illuminatus reminds Francis of the biblical episode of the hidden talent and induces Francis to tell the few brothers present about the vision of the seraph. Francis does this, but he omits the impression of the stigmata on purpose. The seraph had told him certain other things (*aliqua*) which, for as long as Francis lived, he was not to reveal to anybody (*aliqua dixerit, quae numquam, dum viveret, alicui hominum aperiret*). The emphasis is on "opening" (*aperiret*) these other things. This becomes St Francis's secret – "secretum meum mihi"! Throughout the ensuing text, Bonaventure then adds several quotes from the Gospels which emphasize the necessity to conceal truth. Such is the case of "arcana illa [...] eloquia, [...] non liceret hominibus loqui".[689]

In such a way Christ *dux* had transformed Francis the lover "perductus" into the same image of the beloved. Francis carried the effigy of Christ down the mountain impressed into his flesh by the finger of the living God. Bonaventure adds, "Et quoniam sacramentum Regis abscondere bonum est, ideo secreti regalis vir conscius signacula illa sacra pro viribus occultabat".[690] From this passage it is clear that for St Bonaventure, the two terms, *sacramentum* and *secretum,* are semantically equivalent. The Lord himself had impressed those signs secretly (*secrete*). They were, therefore, to be kept secret. In this sense, Bonaventure

[688] *Leg. maior*, 13,4.
[689] *Mt*, 25,25.
[690] *Tob.*, 12,7.

describes St Francis as the "strenuissimus miles Christi", the "dux in militia Christi futurus", who must silently carry the weapons of the invincible Dux into battle.[691]

Bonaventure has effectively used Francis's own silence to further demonstrate the divine nature and veracity of the stigmata. Such a gift or sacrament must be kept secret. The language of mysticism is based on the ineffability of divine experience. Such language transcends the conventional language of men and, therefore, uses the language of images. The very root of the word *mystery* means, after all, "to close one's eyes or mouth.[692] Thanks to the expedient of friar Illuminatus, Bonaventure exemplifies his understanding of mystical language by describing St Francis's climb of La Verna via images and by keeping St Francis silent.

Analogously, Petrarch is "ductus" up to the top of Mt Ventoux and somehow goes through a transfiguration in his intellectual relationship with godhead. He climbs thus far in the company of Gherardo and two servants. Seeing that both he and Gherardo had stripped themselves of their excess clothing, the servants were hardly necessary. They merely serve the narrative function to re-create the presence of four people in the original biblical account of Christ's transfiguration on Mt Tabor. Despite the presence of three other people, let us remember that, after all, Petrarch himself had introduced the climb in the incipit as something he had done completely on his own. The first and last elements of the incipital paragraph remain in the reader's mind in the form, "Altissimum [...] ascendi". This aloneness, *seorsum*, is also reflected in Petrarch's not mentioning his brother during the descent:- "remeavi". Though in the company of his brother and two others, the first and last message in the *Familiaris* is that Petrarch accomplished

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[691] *Leg. maior*, 13, 9-10.

[692] The term 'mystery' derives from μυεω which means "to close one's eyes or mouth", "to initiate in the mysteries of Eleusis".

the task of climbing up to, and down from, the Lord alone. The biblical and Franciscan *seorsum* is implicit throughout the entire text right from the beginning to the end. After all, Petrarch addresses the letter to Dionigi to discuss *de curis propriis*, not anybody else's. Interestingly, Constable, though maintaining the thesis of unconditional praise on Petrarch's part for monasticism, also reads the explicit of the Mt Ventoux as Petrarch having climbed down again alone. Constable writes that Gherardo had remained on the top, but that Petrarch had come down the "wiser man", that is, wise enough to know *not* to become a monk.[693]

Bonaventure continues in his account pointing out that St Francis fasted in honour of St Michael Archangel during Lent. St Francis, therefore, had climbed La Verna just before Easter. The chronological setting of the Bonaventurian account, therefore, is meant to be read as a prelude to St Francis's receiving of the stigmata. In the climb, St Francis fully enters into the phase of his life based on *imitatio Christi*. This will also entail his crucifixion.

The analogies between the Franciscan climb of La Verna and the Petrarchan climb of Mt Ventoux are striking. Petrarch also climbs his mountain around Easter. The fact that it falls, as I mentioned above,[694] on Friday 26 April, that is, two days before the fourth Sunday after Easter,[695] is probably dictated by reasons of literary, numerical and liturgical correspondence with the more famous *Feria* VI *Aprilis* of 1327 in which Petrarch had supposedly seen Laura for the first time. The fact, however, that Petrarch's climb occurs around Easter suggests yet another model: Dante. The descent into the "selva oscura" might well have started, though Dante does not state this, on Good Friday 1300. If this is not so, Dante's journey can, nevertheless, be said to mirror Christ's own Passion. Billanovich hypothesized that

[693] Constable, 1980, p.98.
[694] See p. 171.
[695] In 1336 Easter fell on 31 March.

Petrarch's ascension also fell on Good Friday.[696] Though this is not correct, as I pointed out above,[697] it is plausible, nevertheless, to understand this ascension in the light of redemption and conversion. Like Dante, Petrarch too is "Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita", inasmuch as ten years have passed since his days of youthful study in Bologna and ten years will have to pass, as he himself states, before his struggle will end.[698] The end of his "youthful study" in Bologna also coincided, however, with his first sight of Laura in 1327. In just over ten years' time (1347/8), Laura was due to die of plague. Could Laura be the "struggle" to which he alludes? The *medietas* of the Mt Ventoux letter would thus coincide with the middle of Petrarch's relationship (in whatever way this is articulated) with Laura. Furthermore, by calculating Roman-style the number of years between Petrarch's birth in 1304 and the supposed date of the climb of Mt Ventoux, 1336, thirty-three years had passed. Not only, therefore, is Petrarch roughly middle-aged and in the middle of his relationship with Laura, but he is exactly as old as Christ was on another hill, Calvary.[699]

In the incipit of the *Familiaris*, Petrarch had stated that he had decided when to leave home and had arrived in the evening in the town of Malaucène at the foot and to the north of Mt Ventoux. Here they had stayed for one day. Only on the third day were they to set off to climb the mountain. Petrarch's climb of Mt Ventoux mirrors Christ's *descensus ad inferos* which I discussed in the chapter on the *De otio*. Imitating Christ, Petrarch remains the entire next day at the foot of the mountain, obviously in preparation for the climb. "On the third day, Christ rose again, according to the Scriptures." Similarly, on the third day, Petrarch begins his

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[696] Billanovich, 1966, p.396.
[697] See p. 171.
[698] Cf. Durling, 1974, p.13.
[699] For other parallels with Dante in Petrarch's *Ventosa*, see Mercuri, 1987, pp.344-349. For a fuller discussion of the parallels between Petrarch and Christ in this context, see Lokaj 2000f.

climb up to the Son (*Filiolus*), and we might add, 'according to himself'. Thanks to the Franciscan model as intermediary, Petrarch finds his own model of *imitatio Christi*.

Petrarch's climb of Mt Ventoux and, specifically, his reading of St Augustine at the top, seems to be articulated according to the Franciscan *Legenda* from the point of view of lexis and orchestration of events. For brevity, I shall list these points here:-

1. **sweetness**: In his preparation for the stigmatisation, St Francis was inundated with an extraordinary sweetness in his contemplation (supernae contemplationis **dulcedine**). Similarly, Petrarch finds in his own contemplation of St Augustine's *Confessions* an infinite sweetness (infinita **dulcedo**).
2. **Gifts from above:** For St Francis, this sweetness is part of the "supernarum [...] immissionum [...] **dona**". Analogously, Petrarch emphasizes that his copy of the *Confessions* is a **gift**.
3. **Elevation:** St Francis - "Ferebatur quidem **in altum**". Analogously, Petrarch writes: "nunc exemplo corporis animum **ad altiora** subveherem".
4. **Companion present**: Just as St Francis has the Gospel opened by a ***socius***,[700] so too does Petrarch have the will of God "opened" to him by a **companion**. This companion was not Gherardo, but St Augustine himself, whom Petrarch always carried around with him in his own pocket edition.

[700] Bonav. *Leg. maior*, 13, 2, "Immissum est igitur menti eius per divinum oraculum, quod in apertione libri evangelici revelaretur ei a Christo, quid a Deo in ipso et de ipso maxime foret acceptum. Oratione itaque cum multa devotione praemissa, sacrum Evangeliorum librum de altari sumptum in sanctae Trinitatis nomine aperiri fecit **per socium**, virum utique Deo devotum et sanctum". cf. *Io.*, 13, 1.

5. **Apertio libri**: Gospel: *Confessions*
6. **Imitatio Christi/ Stigmatisation**: St Francis understands in his passion that he ought to imitate Christ in this world before departing from it. This is what Petrarch advocates for himself and Gherardo by adducing the metaphor of the *bellator* or *nauta* or even *venator* for his *otium litteratum* in the name of Christ for whom Petrarch will receive wounds of the flesh, as in the case of "quello stral dal lato manco/ che mi consuma, et parte mi diletta" of sonnet 209 vv.12-13. That is, Petrarch becomes a wounded (stigmatised?) *miles Christi*, just as St Francis had been called *strenuissime miles Christi* by St Bonaventure.

Respecting these six phases of conversion is Franciscan, not Augustinian. In other words, Petrarch has completed his Augustinian conversion through the Franciscan model, as described in the *Legenda maior*.

The *Obstupui* of the next section[701] is the perfect of *obstupescere*: "to be struck with amazement, to be astonished, benumbed". Petrarch uses this verb in *Secretum* III in reference to his analysis of love.[702] In this passage, "the poet conscious of nature" is Virgil. There is, therefore, a classical authorisation of the analysis of love at hand. The fact that it is St Augustine who states that *stupor* is the beginning of love means that there is also a patristic authorisation of Petrarch's analysis. The fact that after the *Sortes* Petrarch writes "obstupui" means that he has been dumbstruck by the onset of love. In his own technical language, on reading the

[701] *Fam.*, IV 1, 28-29, "Obstupui fateor; audiendique avidum fratrem rogans ne michi molestus esset, librum clausi, iratus michimet quod nunc etiam terrestria mirarer, qui iampridem ad ipsis gentium philosophis discere debuissem nichil preter animum esse mirabile, cui magno nichil est magnum. Tunc vero montem satis vidisse contentus, in me ipsum interiores oculos reflexi, et ex illa hora non fuit qui me loquentem audiret donec ad ima pervenimus; satis michi taciti negotii verbum illud attulerat".

Sortes, Petrarch becomes, therefore, like Dido, an "ardens amans", a lover burning with love.

As an *ardens amans*, Petrarch also establishes an analogy between Dido, himself and St Francis. That is to say, if we then compare this passage to the Bonaventurian text, we find that St Francis, after the ineffable vision of the seraph, has become "amicus Christi"[703], with an "insuperabile amoris incendium boni Iesu".[704] St Francis has a "mirabilis ardor" infused into his heart by the seraph whereby he is "divini amoris fervore succensus".[705] Such "operatio seraphica purgat, illuminat et inflammat [...] expurgando a peste salutem, serenitatem et calorem corporibus".[706] By this, Illuminatus is "admodum stupefactus".[707] In other words, "verus Christi amor in eamdem imaginem transformavit amantem". St Francis is an "ardens amans", the Christ-like lover burning with the love of Christ. This leaves people stupefied. It would follow, therefore, that in reading the *Sortes*, Petrarch comes across some type of love. In his own technical language, he, like Dido and St Francis, is transfigured into the *ardens amans.*

As I suggested in brackets above, there may indeed be an ideological-literary parallel in Petrarch's imitation of the Franciscan *imitatio Christi*, between St Francis's stigmata and Petrarch's wounds. When told by Virgil (alias the *pastor vociferans*) that the climb would ruin their clothes, the two brothers undress.[708] This undressing or unburdening reminds us of Virgil's own account of his climb. I believe that "et amictum" is concessive. After all, if the expression only referred to the shepherd's clothing, the following "lacerum" would probably, though not

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[702] *Secr.*, 3, p.152, "Habeo quod volebam. Obstupuisti, credo, perstrinxitque oculos fulgor insolitus. Dicunt enim stuporem amoris esse principium; hinc est apud nature conscium poetam: obstupuit primo aspectu sidonia Dido. Post quod dictum seguitur: ardet amans Dido".
[703] *Leg. maior* 13, 3
[704] *ibid.*, 13, 2.
[705] *ibid.*, 13, 3.
[706] *ibid.*, 13, 7.
[707] *ibid.*, 13, 4.

necessarily, have been conjugated as *lacera*. It is more likely that "lacerum" refers only to the shepherd's *corpus* and "amictum" not to the garments he was wearing, but rather to his clad body. The emphasis, therefore, is not upon the tearing of garments, but upon the wounds of the flesh received in the climb. In unburdening themselves of their cumbersome clothes, the young Petrarch and Gherardo apparently seem to be worried only about spoiling them. What they naïvely do not consider is that they are, in fact, exposing themselves to even greater wounding.

Presumably by going straight up the mountain, Gherardo is not wounded, for he even has time to rest and laugh. Petrarch, on the other hand, is on an intellectual-spiritual pilgrimage among the lower dales. In order to reach the *locus amoenus*, he must open up pathways for himself. By the time he gets there and finally sits, he would have been pricked and cut by the thorn-bushes mentioned by the *pastor vociferans*.[709] The allusion of the thorns to Christ's crown of thorns and St Francis's stigmatisaton thanks to the climb of the Verna is all too evident.

It is on this point that I hypothesise a terminological conflation between Petrarch's possible reading of Bonaventure's *Legenda maior* and the Franciscan *lectio* that day of the Apocalypse. We saw above that Petrarch thought that he was "dignus" of opening the *signacula* of the book.[710] The book is both the Book of the Apocalypse and Augustine's *Confessions*. The term *signacula*, however, is enigmatic. Being a diminutive of *signum*, it was taken in mediaeval Latin as both 'seal' (as it *is* in the *Apocalypse*), and 'sign'. In Dante, for example, it has both these meanings, where, however, both "sigillo"[711] and "segno"[712] probably indicate Christ's stigmata. If Petrarch thought that he was "worthy" of "opening the book",

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[708] *Fam.*, IV 1, 8.
[709] *Fam.*, IV 1, 7, "et amictum lacerum saxis ac vepribus".
[710] See p. 173.
[711] *Par.* XI 106-108, "nel crudo sasso intra Tevere ed Arno/ da Cristo prese l'ultimo **sigillo**,/ che le sue membra du' anni portarno".

then the following question would be whether he might not have felt himself 'worthy' of receiving the stigmata, albeit in a literary fashion. We must also imagine, however, that a 'stigmatised Petrarch', the lover and singer of Laura, the upholder of classical learning against monastic *otium*, might have been perceived not only as blasphemous, but also, perhaps, as laughable.

In a Franciscan and mystic sense, however, Petrarch has decided not to mention it again in the letter. Like St Francis, who did not know whether "dicere vel tacere", but ends up keeping it as his secret until his death, so too does Petrarch keep quiet about it. The wounds received in fighting as a *miles Christi* under the walls of *Cartusia* as described in the *De otio*, and the wounds of the heart received from Laura in the *RVF*, would thus have a codified allegorical counterpart in the Mt Ventoux letter. By climbing Mt Ventoux, that is, by developing a poetics based on *imitatio Christi*, under the aegis of Augustinian theology but completed, as it were, by the Franciscan model, Petrarch has also undergone mystically silent crucifixion.[713]

In mirroring Christ's Passion on Calvary, the toponym, Malaucène, especially in Petrarch's Latinization of it, *Malausana*, might be interpreted as "which heals all wrongs" ([*omnia*] *mala sanat*).[714] Malaucène was also important for the Franciscan spirituals after they withdrew from the Avignon convent in 1312.[715] On 7 May, 1318, in the city of Marseilles, Pope John XXII wanted to overthrow the Spirituals within the Franciscan Order once and for all, so he ordered the last four Spirituals who would not obey the precepts of the papal bull *Quorumdam exigit* to

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[712] *If.*, IV 53-54, "quandi ci vidi venire un possente,/ con **segno** di vittoria, coronato".
[713] For a closer examination of the equations 'wounds of the heart' = 'wounds of the flesh', & 'crown of thorns' = 'crown of myrtle and laurel', see Lokaj 2000f. It would seem that Boccaccio understood the symbolism of Petrarch's climb of Mt Ventoux, though, perhaps, not necessarily through the Franciscan paradigm, in his 1371 *Epist.*, XIX to Pizzinga.
[714] Even though the toponym itself more probably derives from *mollis*, used for damp terrain. Another possible etymologisation might be "male ausus", but this would not seem to fit in with the implicit Petrarchan programme.

be burnt at the stake.[716] Petrarch did not leave the University of Montpellier until the following year, 1319. He, therefore, was present in the south of France when the news of the 1318 burning spread and left all of Provence shocked. He must also have seen the series of persecutions and excommunications, which shed blood right throughout southern France.[717] Petrarch saw, in other words, what the drastic and unexpected papal decision was capable of. He also saw, however, the reaction of the people to such papal decisions. Papal politics obtained exactly the opposite effect. That is, it fostered anti-papal feelings, especially among the Franciscan spirituals and the Beguines. In the following years, John XXII invited many leading thinkers to Avignon, such as William of Ockham, Ubertino of Casale, Bonagrazia of Bergamo and Michele of Cesena.[718] These were intellectuals whom Petrarch might have met either directly or indirectly. Boccaccio informs us, for example, that Petrarch was "monarcha" in logic thanks to the Franciscan William of Ockham.[719] These same intellectuals invited to Avignon will have to flee from the Holy See. In order not to end up burnt as heretics at the stake like the four fraticelli in 1318, some will seek protection under the aegis of Emperor Ludwig of Bavaria. In the following years, the Spiritual Franciscans will not be so eager to accept invitations to the Holy See to discuss matters of dogma with the pope and his cardinals. The more careful fraticelli decide, instead, to keep at a safe distance to the north of Avignon, in a small half-collapsed church in Malaucène. This church was destined to become, in the same years in which Petrarch was living only a few kilometres

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[715] Cf. Lambert, 1961, p.202.
[716] Cf. Lambert, 1961, p.215; Perugi, 1985, p.105; O'Rourke Boyle, 1991, p.88.
[717] Perugi, 1985, p.105.
[718] Cfr. *ibid.*, p.93.
[719] Cfr. *Epist* I (II) *Mavortis milex extrenue*, in Boccaccio *Opere*, p.1068, "estque in artibus per excellentiam hiis monarcha: in gramaticha Aristarchus, Occam in logica". For Petrarch's training in the field of logic, perhaps Boccaccio was thinking of works by Ockham such as the *Expositio aurea super artem veterem* or the *Summa totius logicae*. Both these works were written by the Franciscan philosopher while he was a professor at Oxford between 1319 and 1324. Lambert (p.244) specifies, however, that "there is no sign of particularly Spiritual doctrine in any of [Ockham's] writings".

away in Vaucluse, the Provençal stronghold of the Franciscan spiritualist resistance to papal oppression.

In Canzone 70 of the *RVF*, Perugi has managed to connect the final hendacasyllable of the first stanza, "Drez et rayson es qu'ieu ciant e·m demori", to the incipit of a composition to which Petrarch apparently attributed the dignity of a model or *auctoritas*.[720] This first hendacasyllable *cum auctoritate* is to be interpreted in a spiritual-Franciscan key. The song from which Petrarch extrapolates the line refers to the execution of the four fraticelli burnt as heretics in 1318. Its author, a certain Raimon de Cornet (confused by Petrarch with Arnaut Daniel), had been directly involved and had, though only for a few months, worn the Franciscan habit.[721] This song, written in Provençal, had been produced in the same milieu in which many Franciscan-oriented troubadours were working around the end of the thirteenth century. It was in this same milieu that the deeds and words of the Franciscan heretic, Pier de Jean Olieu, were put to music.[722] It was, therefore, in a *heretical* Franciscan environment that Petrarch found a model to represent a significant part of his poetic production. It is this same light that, perhaps, we should also see the ascent of Mt Ventoux as an allegorically expressed attempt to continue the climb up to the Son, not from Avignon or elsewhere, but rather from Malaucène, that is, from a Spiritual Franciscan basis. Gherardo, who had chosen the Carthusian Order, could not possibly fit in to this Franciscan scheme of redemption.

After the *apertio libri*, Petrarch has realised that the soul is the greatest and most wondrous thing possible. He is embarrassed, however, that he had not already learnt this from the "ipsi gentium philosophi" whom he had already studied in depth, such as Seneca. The difference between his understanding of the greatness of

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Petrarch Spiritual sympathies, therefore, would seem to be based on direct, and not bookish, learning.

[720] Perugi, 1985, p.9.

[721] *ibid.*, p.105.

the soul afforded him by the classics and what he knows now is measured in the height he has just climbed in Christian terms. If we consider Petrarch's reading of Livy as the first instance in the text of *sortes* or "chance" reading, then it would follow that Livy had led Petrarch to St Augustine, the classics to patristics. The resulting gnoseological formula followed throughout the Ventoux letter would thus be: classical knowledge (Livy, Ovid, Virgil) → filtering through the Augustinian paradigm: → tempering through the paradigm of Franciscan–style *imitatio Christi*: → Petrarchan *miles Christi*. To reach this understanding, Petrarch has not followed Gherardo's *modus ascendendi* (ascesa=ascesi) at all. Petrarch has not passed through the cloister.

'De otio'-style 'correct vision' and, again, Lucretius

The revolution espoused here is contained in the very same mystical language of the climb. Once on the top of Mt Ventoux the sun begins to set. The day is coming to an end and every living animal is already preparing to close its eyes to sleep. Yet it is here that Petrarch is *expergefactus* [awakened] and can now see more clearly than ever before. Petrarch can adynatically see better now that it is getting dark. Whereas he had admired the countryside below, now he learns the lesson at hand and begins his reflection on his soul (*in me ipsum interiores oculos reflexi*). During the working day, Gherardo had even managed to sleep. This represents his *otium*. Paradoxically, now that the day is over, Petrarch begins his *negotium*, his reflection on "verbum illud". Gherardo's life as a Carthusian monk has trained him to be "audiendi avidus". Gherardo the monk and, therefore, traditional religiosity, was content to listen to what others had learnt about God. The traditional relationship with the divine was always mediated and therefore filtered in some fashion. One simply and

[722] *ibid.*, pp.150 & 160.

passively accepted it. Petrarch, instead, applies his own faculties and learns for himself what he cannot and must not impart to others. Religious experience, according to this Petrarchan vision, was ineffable and utterly personal. Whereas Gherardo is content to listen to others, Petrarch is "content to have seen for himself" (*satis vidisse contentus*).

Indeed, like the application of *bonum collyrium* in the *De otio*, the Mt Ventoux letter can be described as a process of acquisition of correct vision. Petrarch learns from St Augustine that he had been wondering at the sights such as the Pyrenees, Lyon, etc. The verb used for such external gazing was *admirari* or *mirari*. The lesson learnt from the *Sortes*,[723] however, is that the soul is *mirabilis* above and beyond any physical belvedere. Thanks to the example of the body and the object of this "admiring", Petrarch's understanding changes with a concomitant change in the way in which he sees. From using *admirari* for external things, the verb is then used for the nobility of our soul (*admirantique nobilitatem animi nostri*). The concomitant change in the ocular apparatus is denoted with a parallel modification of the prefix added to the verb *spicere*. We can indeed summarise the climb of Mt Ventoux from the point of view of *modus spiciendi*. The mountain is first of all "conspectus", almost always in one's eyes.[724] That is to say, the Son is before everyone. It attracts attention. It is, in a word, conspicuous. Petrarch starts the climb and, at a certain height, he realises that the clouds are beneath him. Here he can finally turn backward to cast his glance out over what he had not quite been able to discern before. For this backward looking he uses *respicere* but still has some climbing to do. Though he himself is *respiciens*, Mt Ventoux is still *conspiciendus*, to be admired as something demanding attention.[725] At this same

[723] Even though the phrase itself is a quote of Seneca *Epist*, 8,5, cit. in Billanovich, 1966, p.394.
[724] *Fam.*, IV 1, 1, "mons autem hic late undique conspectus, fere semper in oculis est".
[725] *ibid.*, 17, "Respicio: nubes erant sub pedibus [...] in minoris fame monte conspicio".

point, Petrarch then directs his sight towards Italy. It is in this direction that his soul is most inclined.[726] This is the first time that Petrarch actually looks ahead, as the direction of Italy is the same as his climbing of Mt Ventoux. His climbing towards the Son has brought his sight into line with the inclination of his soul. Shortly afterwards, he turns, like Lot's wife, to cast his eyes on the borders of Provence. In other words, ascent now allows Petrarch to "see" more clearly what had also been around him – his past life in Provence, St Augustine, and his future and 'fate' in Italy. We have already interpreted this *respicere* as a farewell, a looking towards an area of his life which has come to a close, stagnation or death. Here Petrarch continues using the verb *respicere*. The *sortes*, however, introduce a new mode of seeing: *inspicere* [peering within]. The verb in itself is used only once in this context, but it is represented by two syntagmata of analogous semantic value. These are: *defixi oculos* [I cast my eyes downwards], and "in me ipsum interiores oculos reflexi". Petrarch's *inspicere* becomes *introspection* in the modern psychoanalytical meaning. This is necessarily accompanied by silence, as this is his ineffable encounter with the divine within. Until this point, Petrarch had given us a linear account of his climb as if he wanted us to climb the mountain with him via his description. For the first time in his account, now that he is directly contemplating the nobility of the soul via the correct use of *admirari*, he interrupts the account to let us know that the climb had occurred a long time beforehand. He writes, "Quotiens, putas, illo die, rediens et in tergum versus, cacumen montis aspexi!". He needs to interrupt the account so as to introduce his reflections on the climb and allude to the question of future happiness. He will then resume the account in the last paragraph. In this interruption, Petrarch uses for the first time a different prefix for his *spicere*. Turning to see is no longer described with *re-spicere*, but with *ad-*

[726] *ibid.*, 18, "Dirigo dehinc oculorum radios ad partes italicas, quo magis inclinat animus".

spicere. This new prefix modifies the verb, which now means "to look upon with respect/ admiration", "to look to". The change in seeing has been occasioned by the fact that the mountain has now been climbed. On this point, Petrarch uses the Augustinian terms "terrena feditas", which I discussed above in relation to Petrarch's desire to "ordine universa percurr[ere]".[727] If climbing the mountain is equivalent to piecing back the scattered fragments of his soul, then looking back towards this mountain is an ascetical occasion in itself.

The explicit of the letter confers greater cohesion to the entire work and demonstrates a close ideological connection with the *De otio.*

> **Illud** quoque per singulos passus occurrebat: si tantum sudoris ac laboris, ut corpus celo paululum proximius fieret, subire **non piguit**, que crux, quis carcer, quis equuleus deberet terrere animum appropinquantem Deo, turgidumque cacumen insolentie et mortalia fata calcantem? **et hoc**: quotocuique accidet, ut ab hac semita, vel durarum metu rerum vel mollium cupidine, non divertat? O nimium felix! Siquis usquam est, de illo sensisse arbitrer poetam: Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas/ atque metus omnes et inexorabile fatum/ subiecit pedibus strepitumque Acherontis avari! O quanto studio laborandum esset, non ut altiorem terram, sed ut elatos terrenis impulsibus appetitus sub pedibus haberemus![728]

On his way down the mountain Petrarch can now afford to appraise the entire climb with these two considerations, "illud [...] et hoc". The first, in fact, takes us back to the beginning of the ascent and Petrarch's encounter with Virgil disguised as *pastor.* Virgil was then, as he is here, antonomastically presented as *poeta.* He had taught Petrarch that the climb would entail *penitentia* and *labor.* At an earlier stage, Petrarch had indeed become ashamed (*pigeret*) at his own embarrassment which had caused Gherardo to laugh at him. This was due to the so-called futile efforts (*labor*) in wandering about in the lower mountain dales. Whereas the *labores* had

[727] See p. 161, n. 622.
[728] *Fam.*, IV 1, 33-34.

continued, Petrarch writes that the climb *non piguit*, it did not cause him any shame. This is in strident contradiction with the episode immediately after the *sortes*. Petrarch abruptly closes the book because he is ashamed to admit to his brother that the passage referred exactly to him who was casting his eyes over Provence. The fact, therefore, that the climb *non piguit* must be seen in a broader sense, in Petrarch's looking back on the climb with hindsight. In other words, now that Petrarch can *adspicere*, the climb *non piguit*, it is no longer at all a cause for shame (and the newly-acquired knowledge is *salutifer*, like Lot's salt[729]). Hugh of St Victor's 'greater good', discussed in the chapter on the *De otio*, has come from Petrarch's wandering through the lower dales.

The following correlation between body and soul is along the same lines as Petrarch's previously discussed "shouldering his soul up to heaven on the example of the body". The emphasis, however, is now on seeing through the false terrors of man, the role of fate and true happiness. Petrarch's correlation prepares the reader for yet another quote from Virgil.[730] Petrarch, however, does not deem Virgil to be the *nimium felix*. On the contrary, the authority of Virgil allows Petrarch to allude to another classical poet, Lucretius.

As we saw in the first chapter, the *De otio* presents the very same quote of Virgil present here in the Ventoux letter as a description of the utmost happiness one can hope for in "this valley of tears".[731] Petrarch's turns his theory of true happiness against Gherardo and Carthusian monasticism. In the first chapter I discussed the catalogue of classical torments which Petrarch analyses in a Lucretian style. Here, in the Ventoux letter, we can detect a similar Lucretian echo in the list of human torments, which are the cross, prison and the rack. These torments

[729] See the discussion on Lot's wife, p. 105.
[730] *Georg.*, 2, 490-492.

obviously mirror Virgil's "metus omnes". In the third book of *De rerum natura* an analogous list can be found:

> Sed metus in vita poenarum pro male factis/ est insignibus
> insignis, scelerisque luela,/ carcer et horribilis de saxo iactu'
> deorsum,/ verbera, carnifices, robur, pix, lammina, taedae[732]

The Mt Ventoux letter and the *De otio* would thus seem to have been conceived on similar bases of Virgilian-cum-Lucretian imitation.

Fate

The role of fate is also pre-empted by Petrarch before the Virgilian lines in his "mortalia fata". The soul dragging itself back up to God should tread (*calcans*) on mortal fate much like Lucretius had been able to kick "inexorabile fatum" under his feet. This brings us back to Petrarch's previous descriptions of what he now sees from the top of Mt Ventoux. The clouds are now *sub pedibus*[733] and the Rhone is now *sub oculis*.[734] Whereas the clouds had prevented him from seeing, the Rhone, inasmuch as it was the river which represented Babylonian Avignon, had prevented him from climbing both poetically, philosophically and theosophically. The possibility of now being able to look down on his obnubilating past means that Petrarch has scored a huge victory over his own human fate.[735]

Petrarch's use of the same verb *verso* for both his own dwelling in the area (*versatus sum*) and the role of fate (*versans*), suggests that Fate had decreed that Petrarch should live in Provence. The verb in itself, however, has a double nature. If "versatus sum" is to be interpreted as the perfect of *versor*, then the meaning is

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[731] *De otio*, p.654. The same Virgilian lines had originally been inserted in the successive *Familiaris* IV 2 addressed to Robert King of Sicily, see Billanovich, 1966, p.400.
[732] Lucr., 3, 1014-1017.
[733] *Fam.*, IV 1, 34.
[734] *ibid.*, 25.
[735] Cf. *ibid.*, 1.

rather static, subtending as it would, a peaceful dwelling, a sweet abiding in southern France. If, instead, "versatus sum" is to be understood in the passive, as textual proximity of the adverbial expression "fato res versans hominum" suggests, then it would follow that Petrarch's life in Provence was far from static. The semantic value would require a translation such as "I have been turned and twisted about violently as if by wind"; "I have been agitated and vexed". After all, such is the meaning of the verb as it is used in the *De otio*, "Babilone versatus sum".[736] His fate is the source behind his eternal pilgrimage.

This very same fate, however, has also guided him to Mt Ventoux. Petrarch is *ductus*. In our previous discussion of the term in the light of the Bonaventurian account of St Francis's climbing of La Verna, the agent of this *ductus* was God. How is this reconcilable with his *fatum versans*? Petrarch seems to make a distinction which can only be gleaned in the light of the entire Ventoux letter. There is a fate which is adverse, which vexes mankind. In other circumstances, such as in *De remediis utriusque fortune*, Petrarch might have called such fate with its almost perfect synonyms *fortuna, fors, sors* and *casus*. In a word, vexing fate might very well be Virgil's "inexorabile fatum", which Petrarch pre-empts in the explicit of the Ventoux letter with "mortalia fata". There is also, however, another "fate" which would seem to be comparable to the will of God. It is on this point that Petrarch the philologist and linguist must also have had in mind the etymology of the term. In classical texts, "fate" normally appears in the plural with the meaning of what is said or uttered, as the past participle of the verb *for, fatus, fari* – to speak, to utter. The *fata* were prophetic declarations, oracles, in other words, the will of the gods expressed in some form comprehensible for man. In this light, for Petrarch the Christian linguist, "fate" might ultimately have meant the Word of God, *Verbum*

[736] *De otio*, p.696.

Dei, Christ the Son. It would thus follow that Christ the Son, the *Filiolus*, had led him to Provence and drawn the Italian poet up to Himself. The difference between the *inexorabile fatum*, which vexes mankind, and the Will of God, would in turn seem to be a question of points of view, that is, of *seeing*. Now that Petrarch has been led up Mt Ventoux and can subsequently *see* farther and better, especially now that he has started his introspection, he realises that true happiness consists in kicking, in a Lucretian fashion, the first type of fate under his feet and thanking God for the second. Fearing the first type of fate leads to hell, whereas beckoning to the call of the second type leads up to the Son. The acquisition of this understanding will actually take on an explicit narrative function in the *Familiares*. We shall see this clearly when analysing the *Familiares* XV 2 and XV3.

It is on the faculty of speech that we can also see a certain circularity in the structure of Ventoux letter. If we keep in mind the above discussion of the Latin verb *fari* and his various *modi spiciendi*, then the conspicuousness of the Son, the Word of God, becomes intimately operative in the light of Petrarch's incipital and, perhaps we should say, spurious use of the adverbial expression "ab infantia". Fate has brought Petrarch to Provence where he learns to speak, that is, he passes from the phase of infancy to that of articulacy. Robbins has hypothesised that the Ventoux letter constitutes "the story of learning how to read, of the passage from the partial to totalizing reading."[737] I should like to propose a different hypothesis. Mt Ventoux has drawn Petrarch from his infancy, during which he could only see God in the distance, to the Word. When he gets there, however, he falls silent. Climbing Mt Ventoux would thus seem to constitute a rite of linguistic passage in the process of acquisition and interiorisation of the Word. This engenders aloneness and, above all, mystical silence, where the benefits of such a wounding and lonely

pilgrimage back to God should be revealed, perhaps, only to those few others who can read the sacred signs.[738]

The other *Familiares* in which Gherardo is mentioned

The *Familiaris* IX 2 *Ad Socratem suum, commemoratio premissorum ac superstitum amicorum* from Verona, 12 march 1350.

This is the first mention of Gherardo in the *Familiares* after the Mt Ventoux letter (*Fam.*, IV 1). If it is true that the *Familiaris* IV 1 was really written long after the supposed climb of Mt Ventoux, that is, in 1352-3, then this letter is indeed, in chronological terms, the locus in which for the first time Petrarch introduces his brother.

The letter opens with Petrarch counting his losses as if on a beach after a shipwreck. He wants to talk to Socrates (alias Ludwig van Kempen) now that he has managed to contain his wailing tears and sedated both his sobbing and the vortex of his soul. Only a small part of his great fortune is left. He wants to talk about something much more important than the sweet, abundant riches of friendship. He wants to talk about the necessary "presidia" of life. These *presidia* or bastions are his dearest friends who had seemed to be his but were really not. Amongst these friends Petrarch first of all mentions his two brothers. Immediately a certain semantic overlap between the two concepts of *fraternitas* and *amicitia* becomes evident. Petrarch's mother had given him two brothers, friendship had given him even more. Death took away his first brother while still an infant. The second, Gherardo, was abducted (*abstulit*) by *Cartusia*. Actually, Gherardo had not been

[737] Robbins, 1985, p.535.
[738] For more on how the Ventoux letter explains the profound *ordo* of the *RVF*, see Caputo, 1987, p.96 and Antonelli, 1992, p.412.

taken away (*ablatum*) so much from Petrarch as from the world and thus returned to God.[739] Petrarch respects the fact that Gherardo is closer to Socrates than Socrates' own only brother. Gherardo was also loved by Petrarch as much as Petrarch loved Socrates. Now that a recent friend of his is dead, another is roaming about who knows where, his Sicilian friend Thomas is also dead, his Abruzzese friend Barbato is tenaciously tied to married life, his Roman friend Lelius is busy with affairs of state, and his friend Guido from Luni is occupied with the papal curia and the desire to accumulate wealth. Two of his Italian friends, Franciscus and Johannes, are too attached to the sweetness of their area of birth to visit Petrarch. This array of wayward friends is what induces Petrarch to write to Socrates. Petrarch flatters the Flemish Socrates by calling him "almost Italian". Although he was born in Nunea of Campinia in Gallia Belgica, Ludwig's gentle nature, his ability to discuss things at length and, above all, his love for Petrarch mean that he has become very Italian.[740] Petrarch even explains why he has given Ludwig the name of Socrates. Ludwig excelled in *ars musica* and, therefore, would have compared with Aristoxenos. In fact, he had become the chapel singer for Giovanni Colonna.[741] In this there was an immediate parallel with Petrarch who delighted in playing the lute. It was, however, the "gravitas morum" and the "iocunditas" which induced his friends to call him Socrates. Petrarch then calls Ludwig "unicum [...] laboriose solamen ac levamen vite", his only real comfort and relief in his busy life. Petrarch is now completely alone.[742] Socrates is the only one left whom Petrarch can call upon as an adviser, lawyer and confuter, judge and sentencer. Petrarch willingly

[739] *Fam.*, IX 2, 3, "secundum michi Cartusia iam virum abstulit, imo vero non michi sed mundo ablatum Deo reddidit, Gerardum nostrum nulla in re aut germano tibi unico secundum aut michi quam tibi ullis affectibus iunctiorem".
[740] *Fam.*, IX 2, 8, "origo fecit alienigenam, mansuetudo animi et conversatio longior atque in primis amor mei magna italicum ex parte te fecerit."
[741] Wilkins, 1964, p.24.
[742] *Fam.*, IX 2, 9, "solus sum".

bows down to him. He calls upon Ludwig to choose where they might be able to live together in Italy. It is interesting that Petrarch should choose a syntagma reminiscent of the explicit of the *Secretum*, where he heeds Augustinus's exhortation to be present to himself as much as possible and to gather up the scattered fragments of his soul (with which he will create the *Canzoniere*) – "sparsa anime fragmenta recolligam".[743] Here, instead, Petrarch wants Ludwig to find a way which might "sparsos recolligere amicos". I shall return to this interesting parallel later.

This letter is characterised by a tone which is serious, yearning for company and real personal exchange. Gherardo is generally dismissed. Gherardo's function in the letter is almost that of a traitor for he has utterly abandoned his older brother. The use of the same base verb, *fero*, places the death of Petrarch's youngest brother (*tulit*) and Gherardo's admission into the Carthusian order (*abstulit*) on the same plane. The prefix *abs-* in the second case, reinforced by repetition with the participle "ablatum" and the indirect pronoun "michi" itself also repeated, is more psychologically involving as the explicit message is that Gherardo was taken away *from Petrarch*. The fact that the first brother had died as an infant only serves to underline the atrocity of what had happened to Gherardo "iam virum" and, ultimately, the enormous psychological effect on his elder brother who is now inexorably alone.

It is also in this light that we must read *Cartusia.* Such an abstract use of the name of the Carthusian order is wrought with scorn and anger. Gherardo had been accepted by the Carthusian Order in the April of 1342. He was successively destined as *Clericus redditus* to a small Charterhouse in Montrieux. It was now 1350 and the two brothers had seen each other only during Petrarch's first visit

[743] *Secr.*, 3, "Adero michi ipse quantum potero, et sparsa anime fragmenta recolligam, moraborque

Montrieux in 1347. This first visit, like the second one in 1353, had only lasted a day and a night. The fact is that it had been since Gherardo's entrance into the Carthusian Order in 1342 that Gherardo had not once taken it upon himself to write to Petrarch. Gherardo had disowned Petrarch as a brother and friend, confidant and adviser almost eight years before this letter. If Ludwig van Kempen had been definable as almost Italian because of his "conversatio longior", Gherardo, by comparison, had become less Italian because of his silence. In this letter on friendship, for Petrarch it is as if Gherardo were dead (as indeed he *was*, in the monastic sense that he had relinquished all the trappings of the world).[744] By entering the cloister, Gherardo had ceased to be Petrarch's brother and friend.

The *Familiaris* X 2 *Ad Socratem suum, amica dubitatio de illius statu*.

This letter was sent from Carpi on 25 September, 1348. Given the real fears aroused by the plague, the letter dwells on the absence of friends. Like the prior letter, the *Familiaris* IX 2, Petrarch wonders who the "amici superstites" are. Socrates has not written back to him. Is he dead? The doubting is constantly with him, therefore, it is an *amica dubitatio*. The plague is looming again. Petrarch calls Socrates "frater", almost in antithesis with Gherardo both genetically and coenobitically, and begs Socrates to write. The 'brotherhood' between Socrates (alias Ludwig van Kempen) and Petrarch is, therefore, clearly reminiscent of an earlier one in the plague series to Socrates, whose incipit is "Mi frater, mi frater, mi frater".[745] The plague, in fact, is the backdrop for Petrarch's contrast between Socrates and Gherardo. The "animi labor et vehemens"[746] reminds Petrarch not so much of his own as much as of the world's *mali*, which is reminiscent of *Familiaris* IX 2, 3, where Gherardo was

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mecum sedulo" in Bufano, 1987, p.258.

[744] Cf. Constable, *Monachisme*, 1979, p.7 & Constable, 1980, p.91.

[745] *Fam.*, VIII 7, 1.

abducted not so much from Petrarch as from the world. From Petrarch's point of view (*Fam.*, X 2, 6, "me iudice"), Gherardo, the Carthusian monk, is above all this worrying about others in the world. He has overcome all these miseries by which we are so often shaken. Gherardo is, therefore, "felicissimus" and cause of shame/disgrace (*improperium*) for his elder brother. While Petrarch is struggling amidst the waves, Gherardo is already in the port and looking down on such human tempests. Obviously Petrarch has attached a letter he has already written to Gherardo to this letter to Socrates. He thus begs Socrates to make sure the attached letter gets to Gherardo. It is logical to assume that the attached letter must be the one Petrarch places next in the *Familiares*, that is, the X 3 *Ad Gerardum*, which will be analysed later.

The tone of the *Familiaris* X 2 is decidedly negative concerning Gherardo. It would seem that Petrarch's brother is not interested in the plight of the rest of humanity, including his own brother. It would almost seem, in Petrarch's opinion, that Carthusian *felicitas* amounts to indifference towards the plight of humanity. We shall see, when analysing the *Familiaris* X 3 to Gherardo, that there is a sharp contrast in Petrarch's definition of Carthusian *felicitas* between the two letters. The fact that Petrarch ends the short X 2 by begging Socrates, that is, someone who might even be dead or on the point of dying, to go and deliver a letter to his brother, who has also been defined as almost dead and who is seemingly indifferent about his fellow man, is absurd.

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[746] *Fam.*, X 2, 6.

The *Familiaris* XIII 5 *Ad Franciscum Sanctorum Apostolorum, de successibus suis in romana curia, et de tribus stilis*.

This letter is addressed to Francesco Nelli and dated 9 August, 1352. Petrarch has been summoned to the Roman Curia, or papal court, in Avignon. This Court, however, is far from being Roman in nature. Indeed, Petrarch writes that the Curia "de Roma nichil preter nomen retinet".[747] Let us keep in mind that the letter is dated around the same time in which Billanovich and others posited the dating of the *Familiaris* IV 1, *The Ventoux letter* in which we saw above that Avignon is the conspicuous absentee in Petrarch's backward glance over Provence.[748] Indeed, Provence itself is in strong antithesis to things Roman. Petrarch, therefore, has not been drawn to Avignon out of a sense of respect for the Holy See or for personal gain, but, rather, because of the "love of his friends" (*caritas amicorum*,[749] *caritate tractus*[750]). Indeed, the Roman Curia is termed "odiosa loca"[751] from which Petrarch had given up expecting and wanting things a long time beforehand.

Petrarch mentions two "princes of the Church" whom he describes as "extremely powerful bulls".[752] These two bulls "reign in the fields of Christ"[753] which are, presumably, the same "doubly fertile fields" in which Petrarch describes Gherardo and his Carthusian brethren in the *De otio*.[754] These bulls and, naturally, Gherardo and his fellow Carthusians, are all part of the *grex dominicus* of which Petrarch, in some fashion, is not a part. The two bulls have summoned Petrarch as if they were vying (*certatim*) with each other to see which of the two might convince

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[747] *Fam.*, XIII 5, 1.
[748] See p. 166.
[749] *Fam.*, XIII 5, 1.
[750] *Fam.*, XIII 5, 3.
[751] *Fam.*, XIII 5, 2.
[752] *Fam.*, XIII 5, 4, "tauri validissimi".
[753] *Fam.*, XIII 5, 4.
[754] *De otio*, p.572, "pascitis letis ac duplicibus in pascuis Iesu Cristi".

Petrarch to work for him.[755] One of the bulls wanted to persuade him because of the old favours he had afforded the poet, whereas the other bull, whom Petrarch had never met before, wanted to win Petrarch over by showing him a "benevolence beyond Petrarch's wildest dreams".[756] These two princes of the church wield the authority of the pope.[757] They are, therefore, probably cardinals directly beneath the pope. As such, Petrarch justifies his having accepted an invitation from a seat of power, which he otherwise despised, by writing that it would have been an act of pride not to accept such an invitation from those who were revered and respected by kings and princes.

Petrarch informs Francesco Nelli that the two princes of the Curia, which is full of deceit, tried to bribe him and deprive him at the same time of his "quies animi".[758] They would make him wealthy, "sed occupatus atque solicitus".[759] What would have made others so happy would, instead, have made Petrarch "vere pauper miser et mestus".[760] It would have been a "golden yoke".[761] What the bulls would have liked to take from him was "libertas atque otium cuius appetitu nil natura melius, cuius successu nil michi fortuna felicius".[762] In using the verb "extorqueri", Petrarch alludes to an attempted 'extortion' which, in turn, establishes a very interesting semantic relationship between "libertas" and "gaudium et omnis vite dulcedo", on the one hand, and "otium" and "hae qualescunque literulae" on the other.[763] If we see these two couples of terms in the light of the adverb used above, "felicius", then again we obtain an idea of Petrarchan *felicitas* which corroborates the conclusions we came to in our analysis of the *De otio*. That is, as with *otium*,

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[755] *Fam.*, XIII 5, 4, "Duo illi principes Ecclesie me certatim evocabant".
[756] *Fam.*, XIII 5, 4, "insperata et nova ignoti hominis benevolentia".
[757] *Fam.*, XIII 5, 4.
[758] *Fam.*, XIII 5, 4.
[759] *Fam.*, XIII 5,5.
[760] *ibid.*
[761] *ibid.*, "iugum aureum".
[762] *Fam.*, XIII 5,6.

two definitions of *felicitas* are established whereby we understand Gherardo's definition, on the one hand, as an inert seclusion from the worries of the world characterized by indifference and, on the other, Petrarch's own definition which succinctly describes the life of the committed humanist willingly in the world to fight for it.

Without such *libertas* and *otium*, Petrarch thought that he would not be able to continue living.[764] Petrarch then engages in a kind of *excusatio* for not having accepted the office in Avignon. The *excusatio* is carried out as a Senecan-type philosophical analysis of his own situation. Petrarch has enough to live on anyway. His growing age (Petrarch is now about forty-eight) requires that he should, rather, be trying to sweeten and temper his passions. A greater thirst for gold would now be "turpis". Indeed, the adjective "turpis" occurs three times throughout the letter.[765] Petrarch uses the same metaphor of the pilgrimage which we saw in the *De otio* to describe his life whose span is implicitly likened to the length of a day. Seeing that the road throughout life is now shorter and the hot midday sun, together with the harshest obstacles encountered along the way, is now behind him, his needs are fewer.[766] What he has already procured for himself is sufficient without having to accept the offer from Avignon. Now it is necessary to think of his "hospitium", that is, the tavern where the weary pilgrim may find eternal rest. Avignon would hardly have been able to prepare him anything better for nightfall.

The *excusatio* is also not without anti-papal irony. Petrarch is summoned before the pope who "digito celum pandit et temperat astra galero".[767] Petrarch's desire to be ironic, however, together with his attempt to establish classical

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[763] *ibid.*
[764] *ibid.*, "sine quibus vivere posse diffiderem".
[765] *Fam.*, XIII 5, 3; 7; 8.
[766] *Fam.*, XIII 5, 7, "pro longitudine vie optandum esse viaticum".
[767] *Fam.*, XIII 5, 11.

hexametrical clausulae in his *cursus* (temperat astra galero), allows the reader to glean one of the most important narrative functions of the letter: Petrarch is thoroughly approved of by the papal court from the point of view of both his *eloquium* and his suitability in keeping papal *archana*. Such suitability depended, of course, on Petrarch's diplomatic and theological prowess.

> Extimatio quedam non mediocris eloquii, sed multo maxime silentii fideique mee animos occupaverat; quam vera, viderint fame talis auctores; archanis itaque Maximi Pontificis ydoneus visus eram inque hoc ipsum evocatus.[768]

Petrarch's scathing denunciation of the Holy See, however, is ironically carried out as a question of "style". That is to say, Petrarch's style, as he reports it, was considered by everyone at the papal court to be too high for the "romane sedis humilitas".[769] In this new position, Petrarch, therefore, would have had to "humiliare ingenium", "inclinare stilum" and learn how to write "prope terram" with "humiles sententiae".[770] Petrarch, however, considered this to be too much to bear. The eloquence required by the papal court was "in imo"[771] and required that Petrarch should learn how to express himself "frivole et inaniter et abiecte".[772] The unusual repetition of the conjunction *et* between the adverbs indicates Petrarch's scathing denunciation of the pope's offer. Petrarch diplomatically told the papal court that as soon as he learnt how to do this, he would gladly accept the job. Needless to say, Petrarch was never to return to take up the position.

The following section of the *excusatio* draws a parallel between Petrarch and his brother, Gherardo, from the point of view of such a withdrawal from a worldly life. Petrarch claims to have had many friends even needier than him for riches.

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[768] *Fam.*, XIII 5, 12.
[769] *Fam.*, XIII 5, 12.
[770] *Fam.*, XIII 5, 14.
[771] *Fam.*, XIII 5, 17.
[772] *Fam.*, XIII 5, 19.

Even though Petrarch uses "egentiores",[773] which I have translated with "needier", perhaps the real meaning is more like "more desirous". And it is right here that Petrarch mentions his brother. Before he converted, Gherardo's love of possession and zeal in earning seemed forgivable because he was "egentior" (needier, more desirous??). Indeed, for Petrarch, Gherardo is the prime example of such conversion inasmuch as before (pre-conversion) he needed many things, now (post-conversion), his needs within (*penitus*) were nil.[774]

It is here, however, that Petrarch introduces the idea of Gherardo's having 'turned his glance away' from worldly things. Petrarch uses the verb *despicere* which, however, means both 'to turn away one's glance' and 'to despise, to look down on'. As a matter of fact, in both classical and mediaeval Latin, *despicio* is semantically closer to verbs such as *contemno* and *sperno* than anything else and designates, therefore, the antithesis of the *modi spiciendi* analysed in the Mt Ventoux letter. In other words, whereas Petrarch continually adjusts his sight to see God more clearly, Gherardo has despised everything for Christ.[775]

Gherardo's *despicere* is also the very element which unites this letter with the previous one analysed here, that is, the *Familiaris* X 2 to Socrates. In this earlier letter, Petrarch had used the same verb to describe Gherardo's looking down with contempt of Petrarch's predicament, that is;

> Ceterum hic nunc animi labor et vehemens non magis meorum quam mundi malorum recordatio ante oculos michi constituit Gerardum cartusiensem monachum, germanum meum unicum virumque, me iudice, felicissimum et has omnes, quibus assidue quatimur, miserias supergressum, michi quoque sempiternum improperium, qui me in fluctibus laborante portum teneat et humanas ab alto despiciat tempestates."[776]

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[773] *Fam.*, XIII 5, 8.
[774] *ibid.*, "atque in primis germanum, cui tu tunc multis ita nunc nullo penitus opus sit".
[775] *ibid.*, "germanum [...] nempe qui propter Cristum universa despexerit".

The "ab alto despiciat" also draws a close parallel with the passage in the *De otio* in which Gherardo's life in the port of monasticism is implicitly likened to Aeneas's former life in the city of Troy. Again Petrarch, like Aeneas, is "Troiae sub moenibus altis", tossed about in a stormy sea, destined to sail the seas erring in search for something profoundly new. Indeed, when Petrarch defines Gherardo's post-conversion state as an "inops religio", perhaps he is not simply referring to a religious life without any need for wealth, but rather, a life without any means at all, including intellectual means. Petrarch will, in fact, allude to just this, as we shall see below, in the first three letters he sends to Gherardo (X 3, 4, 5). It is in this light that we shall see that the expression, "ab **altitudine** contemplationum tuarum",[777] which recalls the "ab **alto** despiciat" and the "Troiae sub moenibus **altis**", is very ironic indeed.

Elsewhere I have discussed the importance of this position at the Holy See from the point of view of Petrarch's relationship with another *poeta laureatus*, Zanobi da Strada, who would become Apostolic Secretary in 1358.[778] Given that the position was indeed a coveted, well-paid one, where there is evidence to suggest that not only Zanobi and Boccaccio, but also Petrarch himself really wanted it, the underlying narratological justification for the *excusatio* at hand is probably two-fold. On the one hand, it means that Petrarch had actually been offered the position *before* Zanobi was. On the other, it communicates to the world, including every monastic community, even the Carthusians, that the *summus pastor* of Christendom wanted him and, therefore, approved of him together with every part of his literary production. In other words, if the pope thought that Petrarch was suitable for the job and, therefore, worthy of being listened to and keeping papal secrets, then why

[776] *Fam.*, X 2, 6.
[777] *Fam.*, X 3, 54.
[778] Lokaj 2000c.

should Gherardo not listen to him? The very first letter in the corpus of the *Familiares* written to Gherardo, which will be analysed below, paints a picture of Gherardo not wanting to open the door of his monastic cell to Petrarch so as to listen to what he had to say. The narrative function of the present letter to Francesco Nelli would seem, therefore, to pre-empt the polemic with Zanobi and, perhaps more importantly, to attempt to reach his brother's ears.

The *Familiaris* XV 2 *Ad Franciscum Sanctorum Apostolorum, de cepte profectionis impedimentis*.

This letter was written on 18 November, 1352, that is, the year prior to Petrarch's leaving Provence forever. It is constructed to set up a seeming contrast between Petrarch's decision to visit his brother Gherardo, on the one hand,[779] and the "divine" reasons which prevent him from doing so, on the other. In the letter, despite the long list of impediments, Petrarch states four times that it is nevertheless his firm intention to visit his brother anyway. He uses the expressions: "non manendi animo",[780] "qua [fabula] me ab incepto retraheret"[781], "ceptis absisterem"[782], "eundi proposito herere".[783] Despite this, he was obviously not "destined" to go.

The letter opens with an adage, "Nox habet consilium". The "consilium" or advice will be not to visit Gherardo. Petrarch prepares his bundles of personal items which, as we shall later, are fundamentally comprised of books. The *Familiaris* XV 2 to Francesco Nelli and the *Familiaris* XV 3 to Zanobi are about the same topic - Petrarch's attempt to visit his brother in Montrieux. In analysing them together the

[779] *Fam.*, XV 2, 7, "videndi fratris [...] desiderium".
[780] *Fam.*, XV 2, 4.
[781] *Fam.*, XV 2, 6.
[782] *Fam.*, XV 2, 7.
[783] *Fam.*, XV 2, 7.

overall narrative technique can more easily be gleaned. Such technique is based on a question of *fatum* which, in turn, governs rain, war and even prophets of God.

Many obstacles seem to prevent Petrarch from doing certain things. In time, however, Petrarch always 'learns' (that is, has *us* learn) that it was in his best interest that he had not gone somewhere or had not done something. Petrarch wants posterity to think that the hand of God or fate was constantly guiding him one way or another. My discussion of fate in the Ventoux letter is also operative here. In the *Familiares* XV 2 and XV3, Petrarch uses close synonyms for this guiding presence: *Dei voluntas*,[784] *fata*,[785] *consilium Dei*,[786] *edictum fortune*[787]. Such a list of synonyms is in itself an important key in understanding the future variations in semantic value for similar terms in the Renaissance. In Petrarch's letters, the main guiding expedients are rain, war and prophets of God.

Rain: In the *Familiaris* XV 2, Petrarch informs Francesco Nelli about his attempts to visit Gherardo in Montrieux. The autumn had come and gone without any bad weather at all. Furthermore, although it was now winter, there were still no clouds to be seen in the sky. It was in the middle of November, 1352, that Petrarch decided to set out to visit his brother. No sooner, however, does he leave his house in Vaucluse than the first drops fall. Petrarch's *animus* would like to return home straight away but his physical self pushes on. The gentle shower then becomes heavy rain. As we have already seen, Petrarch now seriously fears for his books but makes it anyway to the house of Philippe de Cabassoles. When his desire to see his brother has almost managed to make Petrarch decide to pack up, leave Philippe and

[784] *Fam.*, XV 3, 5.
[785] *Fam.*, XV 3, 5.
[786] *Fam.*, XV 3, 6.
[787] *Fam.*, XV 3, 13.

push on again, the rain becomes a veritable downpour. The intensity of the rain is directly proportional to Petrarch's conscious desire to see Gherardo. In other words, the closer Petrarch gets to Montrieux, the harder the rain falls.

The next letter, the *Familiaris* XV 3, written to Zanobi da Strada more than three months later, recounts the same events. The rain, however, is no longer described as a gradual crescendo as it was in the previous letter to Francesco Nelli, "lenta pluvia, iustus imber, diluvium, inundatio",[788] but rather as a "repentinus imber".[789] Obviously, the gradual build up of the rain was a purely rhetorical expedient necessary only in the previous letter in order to establish the struggle within Petrarch between *mens* and *animus*. Besides, Zanobi was a long way off in Naples at the time and was not to know any better. It must be said, nevertheless, that the discrepancy between the two contiguous letters would instantly have been obvious for anyone reading the *Familiares* as a *liber*. From this, it is reasonable to infer that Petrarch wanted to point out to his ideal reader that he was using the idea of the hand of God for very specific purposes. The ideal reader was meant to understand that a battle was on between Petrarch's head, which seemed, through its own feigned ignorance, to want to go against what ought to be done, and his *animus*, which somehow understood the workings of God. The resulting psychomachy thus saves Petrarch, on the one hand, from any accusation of loss of love for his brother, and, on the other, greatly enhances the idea that God is guiding him above and beyond his own conscious control.

War: In the middle of the night Philippe de Cabassoles informs Petrarch that a war had broken out between certain Alpine families and that it was impossible to

[788] *Fam.*, XV 2, 2 & 8.
[789] *Fam.*, XV 3, 3.

proceed for Montrieux. At first Petrarch is incredulous but then believes it. In the following letter Petrarch tells Zanobi that such a war breaking out in that area had never been heard of before.[790] The fact is that, to my knowledge, no war or even small feud is recorded in this area for 1352. This fact alone is indicative of the fictitious nature of the *bellum*.

The hypothesis that the alpine war is, very probably, a purely literary invention is further comforted by the fact that Petrarch is quoting Lucan and is, therefore, alluding to the war between Caesar and Pompey for control over Italy and the Roman Republic.

Petrarch: circa occiduum Italie limitem Varum[791]

Lucan: finis et **Hesperiae**, pro**moto** limite, **Varus**;[792]

We might also already refer to the letter to Zanobi (to which we shall return later) in which Petrarch describes Montrieux with similar language: "A Babilone novissima Niceam **Vari Italiamque** petentibus vie medio locus est dextrorsum decem passuum milibus sub**motus** [...]."[793] In fact, it is here that Petrarch explicitly mentions Lucan as a source for this letter. Let us compare the two:

> Petrarch:
> Geminos fratres ferunt ianuenses patria, arte navigatores et **mutatores**, ut Lucani verbo utar, alterum **eoe** alterum occidue **mercis** eximios fuisse.[794]
>
> Lucan:
> Nam quis ad exustam Cancro torrente Syenen
> ibit et imbrifera siccas sub Pliade Thebas
> spectator Nili, quis rubri stagna profundi
> aut Arabum portus **mercis mutator eoae**,
> Magne, petet [...].[795]

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[790] *Fam.*, XV 3, 7, "bellum ubi patrum memoria numquam fuit".
[791] *Fam.*, XV 3, 2.
[792] Lucan 1, 404.
[793] *Fam.*, XVI 9, 1.
[794] *Fam.*, XVI 9, 2.
[795] Lucan 8, 851-855.

We can safely conclude, therefore, that, seeing that torrential rain was not enough to prevent Petrarch from seeing Gherardo in Montrieux, it was as if God (and Petrarch's own literary invention) now had to resort to more extreme measures, a type of plan B: war as an expedient of dissuasion.

Prophets of God: Petrarch delights in feigning stolidity in the art of hermeneutics. Petrarch gives the correct interpretation of the signs sent, such as rain and war, when he writes, "It seemed that my pushing onward was not pleasing God",[796] or, "it seemed extremely clear that God's will did not want me to continue on my way; almost a sacrilege [...] not to bow down to it".[797] Petrarch, however, wants to give the impression that, despite his understanding of the signs, his aim was to continue. It is as if Petrarch were implicitly reinforcing the already established battle between his "animus" and his "mens" governing the physical self, where "animus" is in harmony with "fatum" or "Dei voluntas", and where "mens" is supposedly against it.

Petrarch's "mens" and physical self, however, fall into line with his "animus" when he hears the word of God through some means. In the letter to Francesco Nelli, the Franciscan Philippe de Cabassoles is such a means. The bishop of Cavaillon is presented as a better man than any Petrarch knows, including himself. He is even explicitly called "angelus Dei", the messenger of God. Elsewhere Petrarch describes his very special relationship with Philippe[798] and, via the parallelism with the couple Ambrose-Augustine, he implicitly cites him as a role

[796] *Fam.*, XV 2, 9, "visum est non placere profectionem meam Deo".
[797] *Fam.*, XV 3, 5, "visum est manifestam quodammodo prohibentis Dei voluntatem esse ne tunc irem; pene irreligiosa improbitas est visa si divini prohibitioni quasi mei iuris, incumberem".
[798] *Fam.*, I 4; *Sine nom.* 1 & 12; *De vita sol.*, p.538; *Var.*, 64; Cf. Dotti, 1992, pp.51-52.

model and inspiration for his own conversion.[799] Indeed, it is possible to infer that Philippe was akin to Petrarch in his love for the solitary life, virtue, honesty, eloquence and conversation. It was to Philippe that Petrarch wrote the *Familiaris* XI 4 with the famous poem exalting Vaucluse as the perfect setting for his humanistic studies, *Valle locus Clausa*. It was to Philippe that Petrarch dedicated the *De vita solitaria*. Philippe, however, was ill. Yet three times in various ways he tries to dissuade Petrarch from pushing on, for if only Petrarch could stay, both he and Philippe would be "salvi".[800] How is it, we may wonder, that Philippe's 'safety' depended upon Petrarch's decision? We could possibly imagine that if Petrarch and his servants had remained, Philippe's household would have been better protected from the violence of the alpine war waging around them. However, the idea of Philippe as "angelus Dei" must not be overlooked. It invites us, in fact, to explore the polysemous nature of the adjective "salvi" which obviously does not only refer to physical safety. On the contrary, it would seem that Philippe's spiritual salvation is intertwined in some way with Petrarch's. Philippe, after all, is dangerously ill and possibly close to death. According to popular belief, this would mean that he was more finely tuned into the will of God than Petrarch, more "prophetically geared", as it were, to interpret the divine signs.[801] From Philippe's role as a Franciscan prophet of God, tempered by the importance he held for Petrarch as a model humanist, it would follow that the moral or spiritual exegesis of the letter is that, if Petrarch had continued on his way to Montrieux, all would have been lost. In other words, the humanistic ideal of literary endeavour cultivated in solitude and leading to godhead would have been thwarted. The messenger of God has exhorted Petrarch not to abandon his own climb. This meant *not* going to Montrieux.

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[799] *Post.*, p.12.
[800] *Fam.*, XV 2, 7, "ut si eum meque salvos cuperem, ceptis absisterem".
[801] For the mediaeval *ars moriendi* as exemplified in dormition iconography, see Duclow, 1999,

Analogously we must interpret the following letter to Zanobi. Petrarch had sent off some of his servants to Italy to report on the situation. Elsewhere we shall see Petrarch's constant aversion for servants to whom he always refers as thieves, braggarts, slow in every sense, and, at best, unreliable. In his first letter to Gherardo, the *Familiaris* X 3, we shall see that Petrarch had even found support to complain about his servants in episodes concerning Seneca, Ulysses and Frederick II.[802] In the present letter to Zanobi, however, the *famulus* in question constitutes a real exception. This servant is acute, succinct, well spoken and diligent. In furnishing his master Petrarch with a general description of the Italian situation, he advises him that, in short, returning to Italy right now is out of the question. The servant then "diligenter" gives a detailed explication of the particulars. That is, the servant first of all presents an overview of the situation and then goes into detail. St Thomas Aquinas would not have been any clearer. Indeed, the servant's reasoning is "more lucid than the sun".[803] In a word, Petrarch seems to hear the servant speaking not as a servant, but as a philosopher, or better, as a god.[804] The function carried out in the previous letter by Philippe de Cabassoles – "senex" and "angelus Dei", is now carried out by the "famulus" whom we might define as 'puer senex divinus'. The content of the message is plain: it is God's will that Petrarch should not continue on his way to Montrieux and Italy. Furthermore, seeing that Petrarch is exactly between Scylla and Charybdis, respectively Italy and Avignon,[805] he decides not to seek refuge in Montrieux, but to return to his literary exile in Vaucluse.

When dealing more directly with the letters which Petrarch sent to Gherardo, Petrarch's denouncement of Carthusian ignorance will be self-evident. Here, in the

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pp.379-429, esp. pp.395-396.

[802] *Fam.*, X 3, 30-6.

[803] *Fam.*, XV 3, 9, "Hec cum perfunctorie dixisset, singula diligenter explicuit, rationes afferens sole lucidiores".

[804] *Fam.*, XV 3, 9, "non serviliter sed philosophice, sed divine loqui visus est michi".

two *Familiares*, XV 2 and XV 3, one of the various impediments along the way to visit his brother in Montrieux was the rain which Petrarch feared might ruin the books he was carrying with him. He tells Francesco Nelli that he would have continued on his way to Montrieux if he had been "vacuus", that is, 'without books'.

> Accedebat metus corrumpendi libros, ex quibus sarcinule magna ex parte constabant; sensi libertati obesse divitias, honeri timens, ut ait Maro, qui corpori non timebam. Issem profecto si vacuus fuissem; nunc mansi.[806]

He, therefore, could not go. In the same letter, Petrarch shares with his ideal reader his way of interpreting the role of *fatum*. If we follow the same exegesis Petrarch himself has used, then the implicit comparison established between *vacuitas* and Montrieux is that only those who are "vacui" or 'without learning' go to Montrieux, for *this* was the basis of Carthusian *vacatio* or *otium*.[807] Analogously, in the following letter to Zanobi, Petrarch reveals the contents of the bundle of books he was carrying with him during this attempt to abandon Provence in favour of Italy (an attempt which was doomed to failure). The bundle of books in question comprises works by ancient classical authors together with a small selection of Petrarch's own *nugae* (normally taken to be his works in vernacular). The bundle of books is again compared to the "carum honus" related by Virgil in his description of Aeneas's escaping from the burning city of Troy with his father, Anchises, on his shoulders, and leading his son, Julus, by hand.

> Substiti anxius raroque unquam clarius vidi quid sit illud caro honeri timere a Virgilio relatum.[808]

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[805] *Fam.*, XV 3, 8.
[806] *Fam.*, XV 2, 9.
[807] For another link between *vacatio* and *otium*, see Boccaccio *De casibus*, 8, 1, 27, "velis potius vigilasse vacuus quam satur ocio torpuisse".
[808] *Fam.*, XV 3, 3. Petrarch has effectively fused two Virgilian loci; *Aen.*, 2, 729, "oneri timentem" describing Aeneas who flees from the ruins of Troy with his father Anchises on his shoulders, and *Aen.*, 11, 550, "caro oneri timet" describing Metabus who flees from his enemies with Camilla in his arms.

There is also, however, a superimposition of another myth to which Petrarch assimilates himself entirely. I refer to the myth of Camilla.

> Erat michi predulcis librorum sarcinula et veterum libris immixtum pauxillum nugarum mearum, quibus ipse quoque memphiticas papiros impleo, non quia illud agere sit optimum, sed quia aliud difficile, nichil agere pessimum et preterea impossibile michi et insolitum. In eo statu non tergo timebam ad omnia durato et ferre iampridem docto non tantum pluvias, verum glacies estus et grandines nulliusque iam laboris aut periculi inexperto; non timebam lateri et honeri ut Eneas, sed honeri duntaxat ut Metabus; fateor enim, care michi sarcinule metuebam.[809]

The parallel established between Petrarch and Metabus is not new. Elsewhere, Petrarch compares himself not to Metabus, king of the Volsci, but, rather, to his daughter, Camilla.[810] As a child in swaddling clothes, Camilla had been thrown to safety by Metabus over an overflowing river. Petrarch draws upon this legend recounted by Virgil to ennoble an incident of his childhood when he had risked being drowned by a servant when crossing the Arno.[811]

The contamination between the two legends brings us, however, to the same conclusion: a dire situation in which the hero must secure a future for the lives entrusted to him. It follows that the implicit comparison established between Aeneas and Petrarch creates, in turn, a parallel between Anchises/Julus and Petrarch's books: the works by classical authors and Petrarch's *nugae* are respectively the trait d'union between the past and the present, and between the present and the future. Petrarch is a second Aeneas who rescues the past (Anchises = classical authors) from destruction in Troy/Provence and passes it on to posterity

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[809] *Fam.*, XV 3,4.

[810] *Fam.*, I 1, 23, "Meminit haud ignobilis Italie civitas, Aretium, quo pulsus patria pater magna cum bonorum acie confugerat. Inde mense septimo sublatus sum totaque Tuscia circumlatus prevalidi cuiusdam adolescentis dextera; qui – quoniam iuvat laborum discriminumque meorum tecum primitias recordari – linteo obvolutum, nec aliter quam Metabus Camillam, nodoso de stipite pendentem, ne contactu tenerum corpus offenderet, gestabat. Is, in transitu Arni fluminis, lapsu equi effusus, dum honus sibi creditum servare nititur, violento gurgite prope ipse periit."

[811] For this particular case of autoschediasma, see Lokaj, 2000d.

through his progeny (Julus/*nugae* = *Canzoniere*?). Indeed, the "carum (h)onus" of the two *Familiares* could well be the same in the *Canzoniere* in the vernacular form of "caro peso" which appears in sonnet 209,4 "quel caro peso ch'Amor m'à commesso" amidst the "dolci colli" of Provence.

Metabus, on the other hand, is the Italic king who saves his daughter and, thus, secures a model of female virtue and military valour for others to emulate.[812] Thanks to Petrarch's use of implicit comparison, we gather that Petrarch sees himself as the link between a civilisation on the verge of disaster and another one still to be founded.

It is at this point in the letter to Francesco Nelli that Petrarch reinforces the nautical metaphor which we have seen both in the *De otio* and the *Familiaris* IV 1, that is, Petrarch as a new Aeneas fighting against the stormy sea below the mighty walls of Troy/Carthusian monasticism. Petrarch writes;

> Mutatis, epyscopo obsecrante, consiliis remissaque in Italiam parte familie, ad fontem Sorgie redii. Pene solus hic sum, non desperans moram vel alicuius insperati boni causam fore vel improvisi cuiuspiam mali fugam; humano enim consilio parum fidens, ceu magister puppis estu victus, rerum mearum navigium commisi non ventis ac fluctibus sed Deo, cuius sub ducatu naufragium fieri nequit.[813]

The decision to remain, that is, not to go to Montrieux and, then, to return to Vaucluse, occurs thanks to the entreaties of the bishop (*epyscopo obsecrante*) which, as we saw above,[814] amounted to bowing down to the *fatum Dei* or will of God. Indeed, the lesson was a question of humbling his *mens* to the awareness of his *animus* in order to avoid some unforeseen *malum*. Moreover, though within the same metaphorical context as Aeneas in the stormy sea below the walls of Troy, such *humilitas* allows Petrarch to entrust the ship of his life not to the winds or

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[812] Cf. Lokaj 2000e.
[813] *Fam.*, XV 2, 10.

waves, but to God. With God as his helmsman (*cuius sub ducatu*), even though Petrarch is below the mighty walls of monasticism, alone to carry his offspring to the founding of a new civilization, he will not experience shipwreck (*malum*) or suffer the fate of Palinurus. Vacuously going to Montrieux to visit his brother would have, instead, brought about *naufragium*.

The *Familiaris* XV 3 *Ad Zenobium Grammaticum Florentinum, de eadem materia*

This letter, as we mentioned above,[815] was written just over three months after the last one to Francesco Nelli, that is, on 22 February, 1353. It is worth considering separately as well as it presents some other elements not strictly part of the general narrative technique which was discussed above.[816]

Gherardo has chosen to dwell in this monastery in order to serve Christ. The adverbial expression "tunsa penitus carne", in turn, qualifies the type of choice at hand. The term "tunsa" is the past participle of the verb *tundo, tundis, tutudi, tunsum o tusum, tundere* meaning to 'to beat, pound as with a pestle". Gherardo is presented, therefore, as having profoundly beaten his flesh. It is plausible, however, to think that Petrarch might also have contaminated the meaning of the verb with a similar verb, *tondeo, totondi, tonsum, tondēre* meaning 'to shear, clip, shave'. That is to say, by this confusion, Petrarch might have meant that by becoming a monk and receiving the tonsure, Gherardo had subjugated the flesh to the spirit.

Five years exactly had gone by since the last time Petrarch had seen his brother in 1347. Now he wants to see him as he passes through the area on his way to Italy. Petrarch, at this point, intertextually alluding to Lucan and, therefore, to

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[814] See p. 216, n. 797.
[815] See p. 214.
[816] See pp. 214-216.

Julius Caesar, as I demonstrated above,[817] also communicates that Gherardo lives "circa occiduum Italie limitem Varum amnem", that is, extremely close to the western-most border of Italy. In Petrarch's psychomachy or tension between Provence and Italy in this moment, he wants to emphasize that Gherardo is almost exactly half-way.

The letter is particularly interesting because of Petrarch's description to Zanobi of Gherardo. Petrarch writes:

> Ubi sim, quid cogitem, quid agam audieras, et fama fuit me procellas curie fugientem Italiam repetere, sedes ubi fata quietas ostendere videbantur. Dum ergo iam iter carperem Ianuam versus nullam aliam ob causam nisi ut germanum unicum, virtute michi quam sanguine cariorem, qui preter viam illam locum solitarium atque silvestrem, cui Montani Rivi nomen est, ad famulandum Cristo tunsa penitus carne delegit, vel in transitu viderem lustro integro non visum, circa occiduum Italie limitem Varum amnem, bello iter interruptum repperi, alpinis quibusdam gentibus armatis ad litus effusis.[818]

It is indicative that Gherardo should be "dearer" to Petrarch for his virtue than for their blood tie. The emphasis is, therefore, on Gherardo's life choice, not on their brotherhood. Analogously, the characteristics of Montrieux are emphasized not through its intrinsic monastic qualities, such as contemplation, learning, prayer, but, rather, by its own etymology, for which Petrarch offers his own explanation. Montrieux would seem to derive, according to Petrarch, from *Montanus Rivus*, that is, from the banks of a mountain river. Such etymologisation of the specific toponym, Montrieux, would seem, however, also to refer to the more generic world of western monasticism. That is to say, every single monastic settlement of a Benedictine matrix is described by Petrarch, in his *De vita solitaria*, as a "rivus" which gushes forth "ex asperrimis montibus". We saw in the chapter on Mary

[817] See p. 215, nn. 792-793.
[818] *Fam.*, XV 3, 2.

Magdalene how *Cartusia* is listed together with other "sacra cenobia". The ensuing description of such holy convents is the following:

> Indicio nunc etiam sunt sacra cenobia, et inter spelea silvestria devotissime domus Cristi: Cistertium, Maiella, Cartusia, Vallisumbrosa, Camaldulum, innumerabilesque alie; quarum religionum **rivi**, etsi celesti devotionis augmento postmodum longe lateque diffusi sint et plana compleverint, si tamen ut magnorum fluminum fontes sic harum queris origines, ex asperrimus **montibus** emanasse comperies. Clarum quidem ex omnibus et famosum Benedicti nomen[819]

Every one of these "religiones", that is, of these "devotissime domus Cristi", is likened to a river ensuing from the same source, which is St Benedict. The metaphor is reminiscent of two literary instances of descent. The first is the "aque metaphora" characterizing the *De otio*, as we saw in the first chapter of this thesis. The second is *Inferno* I 79-80, where, however, the ultimate source of the rivers is not St Benedict, but Virgil. Dante writes that Virgil is the ultimate source, for him in the Latin-speaking West, of so many schools and styles of eloquence. Dante writes; "Or se' tu quel Virgilio e quella fonte/ che spandi di parlar sí largo fiume?". It would seem, from this, that Petrarch has chosen to see in the 'Montrieux' not only a specific toponym, but, more importantly, a generic allusion to the origins of western monasticism. We shall come back to this cryptic, yet indicative point in the *Familiaris* XVI 9 written to Zanobi, in which Petrarch will repeat this etymology with *Mons Rivus* and an even more explicit insistence upon the mountainous and heavily forested area of Montrieux.

Let us for a moment, however, notice a certain parallel description which Petrarch achieves between Montrieux and Vaucluse:

> Montrieux: "qui [*scil.* Gherardo] preter viam illam locum solitarium atque silvestrem, cui Montani Rivi nomen est, ad famulandum Cristo tunsa penitus carne delegit."[820]

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[819] *De vita sol.*, p.428.
[820] *Fam.*, XV 3, 2.

> Vaucluse: "Totis diebus aridos montes, roscidas valles atque antra circumeo, utranque Sorgie ripam sepe remetior, nullo qui obstrepat obvio, nullo comite, nullo duce, nisi curis meis minus in dies acribus ac molestis."[821]

Both places are solitary and somewhere between Avignon and Italy, though Montrieux is much closer to Italy than Vaucluse. Both places are described with respect to a river: "Montanus Rivus" – "Sorgie ripam". Both places are rich in caves: the generic *antra* around the Sorgue in Vaucluse, and the cave of Mary Magdalene at the St Baume just above Montrieux (to which Petrarch refers in *Familiaris* X 4, 21). The geographical description of the two places would seem to want to place them on the same semiological level. It is in the conclusion of the letter, however, that Vaucluse emerges as by far superior to Montrieux for spirituality. We shall see in our analysis of the letters sent to Gherardo that Montrieux affords no instruments for learning. Quite on the contrary, Vaucluse is where Petrarch can reconstitute his ideal fatherland with the best of the classical tradition, represented by Athens and Rome, together with the conversation of all his "friends", both those he personally knew and those who had lived so many centuries beforehand. Whereas Petrarch had initially described his walks along the banks of the Sorgue as happening "nullo comite", it is the presence of "tales comites"[822] that Petrarch can reconstitute his fatherland in his mind.[823] In other words, it is in Vaucluse that he can counteract the "ventositas" of Avignon/Charybdis[824] and the tendency of Italy/Scylla to diffract his *animus* which, instead, he wants to "(re)colligere".[825]

And just as Petrarch had initially written that he has no companion (*nullo comite*) in Vaucluse and yet is surrounded in his mind by "tales comites", his intial

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[821] *Fam.*, XV 3, 11.
[822] *Fam.*, XV 3, 15, "Sic liber ac securus vagor et talibus comitibus solus sum; ubi volo sum".
[823] *Fam.*, XV 3, 14, "hic patriam ipsam mente constituo".
[824] *Fam.*, XV 3, 8, "dum Caribdim fugis, proram agis in Scyllam".

description strikes an even stronger contrast between Vaucluse and Montrieux from the point of view of the presence of God. Whereas Petrarch at first describes his meditation around the Sorgue as occurring "nullo **duce**",[826] he then adds that his hope lies in the guiding hand of God, that is, "In Illius **duc**atu omnis spes est mea"[827] which also refers back to the former letter where he hopes that God will be helmsman: "cuius sub ducatu".[828] Vaucluse would seem to emerge, therefore, as by far superior to Montrieux inasmuch as it is conducive to meditation on learning, friendship, companionship and, therefore, to an integration of the soul. This, according to Petrarch, can take place thanks to God's guiding hand at least as easily as it can happen in Montrieux. When we also consider the narrative technique employed in the two letters concerning the *consilium Dei* and the series of "terrestria atque celestia impedimenta"[829] preventing Petrarch from going to Montrieux, the overall conclusion must be that God's will was for Petrarch to return to Vaucluse and continue in solitude both the humanistic meditation on and the conversation with his ancient and modern friends. It would almost have been "irreligiosa improbitas" not to respect this divine will,[830] that is, not to become a monk, exactly like Gherardo, but with the added dimension of humanistic learning without the trappings of institutionalized living within a cloister, no less guided by God.

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[825] *Fam.*, XV 3, 8, "quot in partes distrahendus animus quem colligere meditaris".
[826] *Fam.*, XV 3, 11.
[827] *Fam.*, XV 3, 12.
[828] *Fam.*, XV 2, 10.
[829] *Fam.*, XV 3, 6.

The *Familiaris* XVI 8 *Ad Lelium suum, de generosis moribus matronarum romanarum*.

This letter was apparently sent to Petrarch's dear friend, Lelio, alias Angelo or Lello di Pietro Stefano dei Tosetti. Lelio is no ordinary friend for Petrarch, seeing that he is mentioned in the *Triumphus Cupidinis*,[831] and is the addressee of the *epistola metrica* on Petrarch's pains of love, a letter bearing the same title as this *Familiaris*, that is, *Ad Lelium suum*. The fact that such a title is plainly reminiscent of Cicero's *Laelius de amicitia* indicates that the atmosphere is intimately Ciceronian above and beyond the Ciceronian inspiration underlying the entire corpus of the *Familiares*. The *Familiaris* is, therefore, part of a learned, friendly conversation between men of virtue.

The topic of the *Familiaris* is intimately Roman, not only because the addressee is in Rome, but, rather, because Petrarch, while going to Montrieux to visit his brother, has had a chance meeting with five Roman ladies on a pilgrimage who had left Rome to go as pilgrims to Compostela.

The meeting itself has been defined in a rather naïve, simplistic fashion as "un incident fort pittoresque".[832] The "picturesque" nature of the meeting is, however, only a superficial appreciation of the letter. An entire literary tradition beforehand might very well have provided not only the constituent elements for Petrarch's re-elaboration of the meeting, but, perhaps, the inspiration for the meeting itself. As we shall see better further down in the present analysis, the letter does seem to be more a product of literary fiction than of fact. This, in turn, will raise some serious questions about the role in it carried out by Gherardo.

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[830] *Fam.*, XV 3, 5.
[831] *Tr.Cup.*, 4, 68.
[832] Cochin, 1975, p. 84.

The underlying inspiration for the *Familiaris* would seem to have drawn upon the thirteenth-and early fourteenth-century literary *fil rouge* which placed Santiago de Compostela as the ideal end of a prodigious, theophanic and perhaps even apocalyptic pilgrimage of the body towards an ever greater understanding of the divine. Indeed, pilgrimage literature is based on this very parallel between the journey of the *corpus* and that of the *anima*. In more official literature, we might recall Brunetto Latini who describes in the *Tesoretto*, during "il viaggio in Ispagna", his chance meeting with 'Madonna Natura', 'Filosofia' and 'le quattro Vertute', not to mention the 'ignudo fresco fante' armed with bow and arrows called 'Piacere'.[833] Almost twenty years before Petrarch, Boccaccio had written his *Filocolo* in 1336-38 about another Lelio who starts, continues and ends his adventures under the aegis of St James "per cui Galizia è visitata".[834] The choice, therefore, on Petrarch's part to place this meeting in Provence, to describe it in a letter form "Ad Lelium suum" and to leave an air of mystery around it would well suggest that the meeting itself did not occur by chance and was far from being only picturesque.

The eschatocollon of the *Familiaris* reads, "Ad fontem Sorgie, VIII Kal. Maias." It is, therefore, 24 April, 1353, exactly eighteen years after the fictional setting and dating of the Mt Ventoux climb in *Familiaris* IV 1. The incipit of the *Familiaris* XVI 8 explicitly states that the meeting happened "Ad XIII Kalendas Maias", that is, 19 April. It is obvious from the letter that, between April 19 and April 24, Petrarch has also visited Gherardo. The *Familiaris* must, therefore, be interpreted in the light of this contrast, that is, the first meeting on the dynamic road of pilgrimage, the second within the static confines of the cloister.

The *Familiaris* at hand is also genetically linked to the *De otio* inasmuch as Petrarch, as I stated in the first chapter, had visited Gherardo for the first time in

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[833] *Il Tesoretto*, vv.135, 1220, 2262 *et passim.*

1347 and had started writing about his definition of *otium*. After this 1353 visit, Petrarch was to modify the structure of the *De otio* and possibly even add the second book which, as I outlined in the first chapter, is possibly based on a Lucretian-type exegesis of infernal fears. Like to *De otio*, which is only apparently encomiastic of cloistered life, this *Familiaris* is also polemical inasmuch as it, by contrast, exalts the intrinsic nobility of the Roman ladies on the one hand and denigrates static, inert monasticism on the other.

With the term 'by contrast' I refer to the discussion I have carried out elsewhere on the narrative technique employed in these *Familiares* which merely refer to Gherardo but are not addressed to him. There I identified, as a fundamental component of Petrarch's narrative technique, the repeated use of contrast, together with the non-spoken, in order to transmit to discerning readers messages which otherwise might have been rather offensive or 'politically incorrect'. As far as this *Familiaris* is concerned, in order not to denigrate too explicitly the Carthusian Order, he uses the five Roman pilgrims as its opposite. The more he exalts the women, therefore, the more he is scathing against Gherardo and his cloister.[835]

In these last few months of his life in Provence, Petrarch must have seen many pilgrims indeed travelling along the *via tolosana*, also called the 'chemin provençal', which wound along the valley of the Durence.[836] This *itinerarium*, described in book five of the *Liber Sancti Jacobi*, was the route which Italian and Balkan pilgrims preferred, amongst whom we might imagine Petrarch's five Roman ladies.[837] This route was called *tolosana* because it passed through Montpellier and Toulouse (where Guido Cavalcanti presumably met his occitanic love, his delicate

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[834] See, in particular, *Filocolo* vv. 1, 5, 13; 5, 87-88, "il santo tempio" in Compostela.
[835] Lokaj, 2000 and Lokaj, 1998.
[836] Caucci, 1984, p.75.
[837] See, for example, the 1472 poem by Franciescho Picchardi, *Il Viaggio d'andare a Santo Jacopo di Galizia*, cit. in Scalia, 1983.

Mandetta, exalted in his ballata *Era in penser d'amor*). After Toulouse, the chemin provençal then crossed the Pyrenees at Somport or Roncesvalles and continued westwards to Compostela.

It is between Aix-en-Provence and Saint Maximin that Petrarch meets the "romanarum ingens acies matronarum".[838] Seeing that Petrarch only offers five names for these pilgrims, it is plausible to assume that there were indeed only five of them. The adjective "ingens" used to qualify the noun "acies" is definitely hyperbolic. Perhaps, however, the "ingens acies" refers more specifically to the exceptional nature of the group for which no mention of male travelling companions or means of transport is made. The image evoked is one of five noble ladies literally *walking* from Rome to Compostela without a retinue. When Petrarch meets them on the road between St Maximin and Aix, their pilgrimage is roughly at its halfway point. This 'walk of life' must have been incredibly attractive for Petrarch, especially in contrast with Gherardo's cloistered and, therefore, static existence in Montrieux, because Petrarch implicitly assimilates himself to the women as a pilgrim. In other words, Petrarch *chooses* their 'walk' of life, not Gherardo's. The fictional quality of the episode is obvious inasmuch as Petrarch normally travelled on horseback, as he probably was doing this time as well, especially considering the fact that he was not only going to Montrieux but also to Italy. The assimilation to pilgrimage is, therefore, intentional, explicitly expressed, as it is, through the verb "pergerem" at the beginning of the letter,[839] and the adverb "peregre" towards the end.[840] As I pointed out in the Introduction, Quinones sees the idea of foundation sacrifice, the killing of one brother by another and their

[838] Reminiscent of Salimbene's *Dominae Albae*? See n.483.
[839] *Fam.*, XVI 8, 1.
[840] *Fam.*, XVI 8, 8, "semper peregre profecturus".

subsequent reunion, as correlated with pilgrimage.[841] This adverb is of paramount importance inasmuch as Petrarch knew it to be the etymological root of the term 'pilgrim'. That is, 'peregre' derives from *per agros*, from which the verb 'peregrinari' in turn was developed.[842] The image Petrarch wants to evoke is of a meeting between pilgrims crossing fields on foot. Moreover, the journey undertaken by the five ladies on their own was something of a miracle in itself, especially in the unlikely event of their succeeding to return to their homes on the Tiber. Furthermore, inasmuch as they are headed for Compostela, the five ladies are real pilgrims who arouse a sense of respect and reverence. They are, therefore, equivalent to the pilgrim *par excellence*, that is, as Dante had put it, the real pilgrim who "va verso la casa di sa' Jacopo o riede".[843]

Though from a distance, Petrarch immediately recognizes in their manner of walking that they are of the best Roman stock.[844] Was *Romanitas* so recognizable? To make sure he was not wrong, Petrarch approaches them and when he hears them speaking, every doubt is dispelled.[845] Petrarch tells his reader that he asked them a question in "vulgaris sermo", which they then recognize as "italice sonum vocis". The question, however, is recorded in Latin as a direct quote from Virgil's *Aeneid* VIII 114. He asks them, "Que genus? Unde domus?", that is, he poses the same question which Pallans had asked Aeneas before showing him to Euander's humble hut. The allusion concealed in the quote is, therefore, to Euander's poverty which was a symbol for the purity of Republican Rome and, therefore, a key to its future greatness.

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[841] Quinones, 1994, p.4.
[842] Constable, 1979, *Monachisme*, p.4.
[843] *VN* 40, 6-7.
[844] *Fam.*, XVI 8, 1, "procul in frontibus in incessu genus ac patriam novi".
[845] *Fam.*, XV 8, 2, "Cum vero iam iuxta essem et voces colloquentium audirem, nichil dubii superfuit".

The *Romanitas* of the five pilgrims must be taken as a plausible given. What happens next is, however, somewhat less plausible. The eldest pilgrim recognizes Petrarch not only as Italian but as Roman. She asks him, "Are you by chance Roman and are going to Rome?"[846] Now, in his numerous travels throughout Italy and down to Rome, it is unlikely, though not impossible, that Petrarch had picked up any specific linguistic connotation of *romanesco*. It is unlikely that a Roman woman, even in the middle of the fourteenth century, would not have been able to discern the differences in inflection, especially seeing that they spoke in the vernacular, between her own city and an Aretino of Florentine parents who, perhaps, had acquired a slight Provençal accent. This fact alone comforts the hypothesis of the letter as a piece of literary fiction. Indeed, Boccaccio in his Neapolitan period before 1340, had already included a similar scene in book one of his above-mentioned *Filocolo*[847] in which Rome and Santiago de Compostela intimately connected. Boccaccio writes,

> Giulia, udendo la romana loquela, la quale Ascalione, lungamente dimorato in Roma, appresa aveva, alzò il viso verso di lui....

Obviously, in the year 1353, the same year in which Petrarch was to abandon Provence (and his brother) forever,[848] he was already embracing the myth of Rome of which he felt part, both as *romeus* (in the generic sense of 'pilgrim') and *Romanus*. In such circumstances, Petrarch's *Romanitas* becomes a proud display of his difference from Provence, even in a linguistic sense. Legally speaking, the *privilegium* accorded to him by the Roman Senate during his coronation in 1341 also meant that since then he had actually been *civis Romanus*.[849] It was now time

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[846] *Fam.*, XV 8, 2, "Tu autem an forte romanus es et an Romam vadis?".
[847] See n. 834.
[848] Feo, 1988, pp. 61-63.
[849] Around 18 Nov. 1351, Petrarch wrote in the *Fam.*, XI 16, 1, "Rome, que et suum me insigni

for him make a real show of his Roman citizenship[850] and, at the same time, accentuate the antithesis between his own *peregrinatio in exilio* and Gerardo's static life *in portu*.

Petrarch answers that he is Roman in his soul, but is not going down to Rome at present.[851] This is because his *Romanitas* is not unconditional. He does not belong to the Rome which has been abandoned by the Romana Curia now on the Rhone and is now involved in its own local feuds between vying baronial families. He wants no part in the provincial Rome which brutally murders those like Cola di Rienzo who try to restore it to its ancient glory and birth right. The Rome to which he feels a sense of belonging is belied by the very term he uses for it. When the five women encircle Petrarch to discuss the current plight of the once eternal city, they tell him about the *Res publica Romana*. Cola's (and Petrarch's) republican hopes had already been dashed at least a year beforehand when the emperor had handed Cola over to the pope.[852] Rome was now only a heap of ideological rubble and tumbledown temples. In Rome "leta" occur, but above all "tristia".[853] The Rome of which Petrarch feels part would one day be re-built, but perhaps only in his literary production and perhaps not even in Rome itself, but in the Milan of the Visconti family.

Petrarch asks about his friend Lelio. Seeing that the five women are of the upper classes, they naturally know him well enough to be able to tell Petrarch that he is well, that he had happily and honestly got married and that he was already the father of a fine son.

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privilegio civem vocat et fortasse non ultimum hoc tempore nominis sui et fame presidium senescentis in me repositum arbitratur." For the other contents of the *privilegium lauree*, see Wilkins, 1951, pp. 53-61; Dotti, 1992, pp.88-89 and Lokaj 2000c.

[850] For another Dantean tessera in Petrarch's *imitatio Christi*, cf. *Purg.*, XXXII 101-102, "e sarai meco sanza fine cive/ di quella Roma onde Cristo è romano".

[851] *Fam.*, XVI 8, 2, "animo romanus, sed nunc minime Romam peto".

[852] Cf. *Fam.*, XIII 6, 11-13; Dotti, 1992, pp.185-186.

[853] *Fam.*, XVI 8, 3.

The women themselves, however, remain anonymous. This fact alone is suspect, as Lelio would have been able to inform their families and friends that they were well and had already reached Provence. Given the very real dangers of such a pilgrimage, such silence on Petrarch's part could only be explained as incivility, that is, if the letter had really been sent in this form, or at all. The hypothesis of literary fiction thus gains consistency.

Petrarch also explores another aspect of *Romanitas* in accepting and refusing money. Petrarch wanted to offer the women some of the money he had brought with him "pro viatico".[854] This act would normally have been considered positively, as alms giving, a donation to a good cause, and not as an act of pity for poor beggars. Petrarch knows that even if he had not told Lelio anything more about it, Lelio would have guessed how they answered. They only wanted Petrarch to pray to Christ for their safe return both to Rome and to Heaven above. Not only would women of other cities have not refused the money, but they would also have insistently demanded what they had been denied. Petrarch knows, however, that truth arouses hate. This is why he does not reveal the identity of these five noble women, not even to Lelio.

The refusal of money as a locus indicating nobility of spirit also gives the reader an indication of the women's character. They refuse the money "una voce", that is, as with one voice. It is as if the women were all a part of the one entity. They are perfect peers, indistinguishable in this account. The "natu maior" is not delegated to speak because it is a fine social norm that the eldest should speak for the others. Petrarch's overall judgement of these women is also expressed with fine

[854] *Fam.*, XVI 8, 5.

respect for convention. It is in the adverb qualifying their refusal, "oblatam pecuniam magnifice contempserunt"[855] that praises their magnificence.

With such magnificent examples of Roman virtue and piety, Petrarch states that he would have willingly stopped in polite conversation until evening. It was not yet *hora tertia*, that is, nine o'clock in the morning, and he would not have liked to keep them from their holy devotion. Besides, he too was in a hurry to see his brother and go down to Italy. It is at this point in the letter that Petrarch realises with whom he had spoken, or better, *where* he had been, as if by talking with these women, he had been transported elsewhere. The narrative is developed as if in that moment, on the road winding down to Montrieux along the *via tolosana*, Petrarch had woken from a dream, a vision or a rapture. The scene becomes reminiscent of many hagiographical tales similar to St Paul's fulguration on the road to Damascus. It is, in fact, very similar to the description in Tommaso of Celano's *Vita Seconda* of St Francis, where Francis comes across three otherwise anonymous women on his way to Siena who greet him saying, "Ben venga, Signora Povertà".[856] Indeed, both groups of women are similar in their anonymity, their sudden disappearance and their uncannily accurate knowledge about the newcomer's background.[857] There is no concrete evidence to suggest that Petrarch knew about or would want to imitate this Franciscan episode. It must be said, however, that learning about one's self out there on the road of life, whether it be St Francis learning about his revolutionary concept of poverty, or Petrarch's learning about his revolutionary concept of *Romanitas*, is part of the folklore not only of mediaeval times, but, I dare say, of all times.

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[855] *Fam.*, XVI 8, 7.
[856] Thomas of Celano *Vita* II LX in *Fonti Franc.*, p.628.
[857] Cf. Lokaj 2000f.

The five women surround Petrarch, "familiarius circumfuse",[858] as they all speak about themselves and Rome. Petrarch does not in any way insist upon their positioning, but they have in fact created a circle around him with him at its centre. A circle thus formed, especially one such as this made up entirely of female elements, symbolizes sapiential perfection whose profound meaning, given the paucity of elements in the text, is completely open to conjecture. The literary fiction in the re-elaboration of the episode for his *Familiares*, however, points in the direction of one particular literary tradition which Petrarch might have wanted to imitate, that is, to be the sixth element introduced into a select sapiential group. I refer to the above-mentioned *Tesoretto* by Brunetto Latini (vv.1220-32, 1262-75).[859] In a dark valley, on the third day of walking (Latini's 'third day' = Petrarch's *hora tertia*?), Brunetto finds himself in "un grande pian giocondo". Here he sees "imperadori e re e gran segnori, e mastri di scïenze che dittavan sentenze". He then sees "un'altra schiera" made up of "quattro donne valenti". If we count the "fresco fante di nome Piacere", then Brunetto Latini becomes the sixth element, that is, the new-comer to be initiated to certain secret knowledge.

Analogously, there is Dante's "bella scola" of *Inferno* IV. Indeed, in our *Familiaris*, the five women have made Petrarch "sesto fra cotanto senno". There are also some possible Dantean intertexts in Petrarch's *Familiaris*. These are: "la voce sola"[860] – "una voce"; "schiera"[861] – "acies"; "parlando cose che 'l tacere è bello"[862] – "nominibus abstinendum", and, possibly, in the opposite sense, "salutevol cenno"[863] – "vale dicto". Let us also keep in mind that Dante's "bella scola" is comprised of Homer, Horace, Ovid, Lucan and Virgil, classical names which Dante

[858] *Fam.*, XVI 8, 3.
[859] See p. 228, n. 833.
[860] *If.*, IV 92.
[861] *ibid.*, 101.
[862] *ibid.*, 104.

presents in the Italian with, therefore, the initials O,O,O,L,V. When Petrarch chooses classical names for the five pilgrims, the initials are C, S, C, M, E, which do not present any particular correspondence. When he chooses, however, the Christian names for the same ladies, the initials are P,P,P,C and A, that is, the same letter is used three times together with two different ones, just as in the Dantean catalogue. Is it possible that even here Petrarch might have wanted to imitate the Dantean locus?

Petrarch's "ubi" here becomes operative. As I stated above,[864] it is as though the presence of the five ladies had transported him to Rome – "Tum primum sensi ubi essem".[865] The five pilgrims are the wives of great men of the Roman Republic, namely the Caecilia of Metellus, the Sulpitia of Fulvius, the Cornelia of Graccus, the Martia of Cato and the Aemilia of Scipio Africanus. Perhaps they were, however, the martyrs of Christ, that is Prisca, Praxedes, Pudentiana, Caecilia and Agnes. These five noble pilgrims represent, therefore, the best virtues that Rome, the eternal city, ever gave to humanity, that is, the values of Republican Rome and those of Christian Rome. This is how they concretely represent the Rome to which Petrarch spiritually belongs.

To change the names of these women from a classical and, therefore, a pagan context to a Christian one, that is, to redefine them as allusive representatives of a different value system, is defined by Petrarch as "convenientius" and "aptius".[866] The letter is, after all, set in Christian times for which a Christian allusion is by far more suitable. In the *De otio* in exactly the same period (1353 ca) Petrarch does something analogous when he stops exalting certain pagan characters, no matter how noble, because in a letter to a monastic settlement, as was Montrieux,

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[863] *ibid.*, 98.
[864] See p. 236.
[865] *Fam.*, XVI 8, 9.

continuing to do so would not have been "religiosum".[867] The five women in this *Familiaris*, however, in such symbolic name changing, become the concrete epitome of the *reductio ad unum* of *litterae divinae et humanae* which Petrarch saw as the very essence of *Romanitas*. These women, therefore, have integrated their classical components in an exquisitely Christian equilibrium. In a semiological analysis of the episode, one might say that Petrarch's basic contention is that the classical heritage in a Christian form leads to a walk of life undeniably dynamic, courageous and anagogically productive.

Gherardo constitutes the antithetical model. The antithesis is achieved in the structure of the letter, in its specular syntax and in the articulation of the episode. The structural feature is the new paragraph which abruptly ends the description of Petrarch's 'vision'. Syntactically, the vision itself is 'surrounded' or 'framed' by the verb *digredi*. That is, the vision is introduced by the sentence, "Digredimur vale dicto"; there is the binomial catalogue; the new paragraph begins abruptly with "Inde digressus".

Gherardo's separateness from the five pilgrims is also underlined by the fact that Petrarch sees him the next day, "luce proxima", that is, another liturgical indication of time like "hora tertia", representing, in this case, 20 April.[868] This time factor is in itself spurious. In the incipit of the letter, Petrarch states that he met the Roman ladies before nine in the morning between Aix-en-Provence and St Maximin. In a straight line, Aix and St Maximin are respectively about fifty and twenty kilometres from Méounes-les-Montrieux, the closest village to Montrieux-le-Vieux and the Chartreuse de Montrieux-le-Jeune, where Gherardo lived. If Petrarch was on horseback, which he would like us to think was *not* the case, he

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[866] *ibid.*
[867] Cf. *De otio*, p.722.
[868] *Fam.*, XVI 8, 10.

would have been able to cover the distance without difficulty. Even if he was travelling on foot, then, given the clement April weather, the distance to which he alludes might also have been covered in one day's walk, that is, in the nine to ten hours approximately between the meeting, which occurred before nine o'clock am, and dusk. Whether the "luce proxima" is fact or fiction, the narrative fact is, however, that a 'different light' shone on Petrarch's visit to Gherardo. For the mediaeval mentality, for which liturgical calendar dates, saints' days, etc. were profoundly significant, this fact is of no little importance.

Petrarch finds his brother "sailing" more happily than anyone else amid the "procellosae mundi miseriae"[869]. It is, however, in the use of the nautical metaphor that an aporia is to be found. In the coeval *De otio* Petrarch describes Gherardo "in portu" within the mighty walls of his new Jerusalem, that is, Carthusia. In the *De otio*, as we saw in the first chapter, it is Petrarch "amens", that is, out of his mind, who is erring on the stormy seas "ex portu", despairing to reach the port.[870] Gherardo "felicissime navigans et [...] a terrenis elevatus",[871] similar to the "Deo sublevante" of *Familiaris* X 4 analysed below, might be semantically equivalent to the verb *despicere* used for Gherardo above,[872] but to have Gherardo now out there on the sea is in strident contradiction with Petrarch's metaphorical view of him in every other locus seen so far. The answer must be, very simply, that, according to Petrarch, Gherardo is still very much out there on the sea/road of life as well. The contradiction between the two works could be interpreted in the light of the fact that, according to Petrarch, entering monasticism at thirty-five, as Gherardo was in

[869] *ibid.*
[870] *RVF*, 189, 14.
[871] *Fam.*, XVI 8, 10.
[872] See pp. 211-212, n. 776.

1342 when he entered *Cartusia*, was much too early an age to "calar le vele" in the port of monasticism.[873]

Further evidence for this is hidden not in what Petrarch writes about Gherardo, but rather, in what he writes about Lelio. Lelio is busy with political and family life, not to mention new fatherhood, in Rome. He is not travelling about, and yet Petrarch refers to this lifestyle as "vite via",[874] literally a 'way of life'. The metaphor of pilgrimage would seem to be a constant, even for those who lead a relatively static lifestyle. The port or final destination of the road (we might remember the "hospitium" or tavern in the *Familiaris* XIII 5,7) of our lives as wandering pilgrims or erring seafarers will be seen only at dusk.

As far as Petrarch's reference to Gherardo is specifically concerned, there is the usual ambivalence, which, as we saw in the *De otio*, consisted in the dichotomy between Gherardo "angelus Dei in terra",[875] "Dominica apis"[876] and Petrarch "peccator homo fessus, inscius, occupatus".[877] In the present *Familiaris*, on one level, Petrarch expresses to Lelio a certain pride that he is the brother of such a religious person. Here and elsewhere[878] Petrarch is amazed at how two brothers born of the same mother could be so different. And yet Petrarch's conversation with his brother is superficial. The two brothers had not seen each for five years, that is, since Petrarch's first visit in 1347. In 1348 Gherardo had nearly died of plague and yet had distinguished himself, as we shall see below when analysing the *Familiaris* XVI 2, as a *reformator* of the monastery. Petrarch does not apparently talk about any of this. Furthermore, after this 1353 visit, Petrarch knew that it was possible that they would never see each other again. There was all the material necessary to

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[873] *Cv.*, 4, 28, 8; *If.* XXVII 81. Cfr. Rossi, 1971, pp.1020-1021.
[874] *Fam.*, XVI 8,11.
[875] *De otio*, p.568.
[876] *ibid.*, p.570.
[877] *ibid.*

share with Lelio a moving account of fraternal love. And yet, the topic which makes him and Gherardo the most happy is "de Lelio nostro". There was hardly any need for Petrarch to create a *captatio benevolentiae* in order to gain favours from his old friend Lelio. What is more surprising is that Petrarch, though knowing that that was going to be the last time he would see his brother, only stayed a day and a night,[879] just as he had done in 1347. In any monastic settlement, visitors could always stay for at most three days without special permission. On this point, why is it, we might wonder, that Petrarch chose not to hurry to Montrieux after his encounter with the Roman pilgrims? That is, why was it that, although it would have been possible for him to make it to Montrieux before dusk, he chose to sleep somewhere else? Why is it, we might also wonder, that we only glean the duration of his decidedly short second visit to his brother not from the present letter to Lelio, but in the following one to Zanobi?[880] Without entering into any attempt to psychoanalyse Petrarch through his own literary elaboration, I believe that an answer is not possible. I do feel, however, that a clue is hidden in the "me tacito" in the explicit. That is to say, we tend to take for granted that after their discussion about Lelio, which had supposedly made Gherardo "letior", that the preterition, "quam vero te salvere cupiat [*scil.* Gherardus], scire te arbitror me tacito"[881] is necessarily positive, that is, that Gherardo did indeed want to send his warmest regards to Lelio. Below we shall see in the letters Petrarch sent to Gherardo how Petrarch actually criticizes his brother for his life choice and for having abandoned his studies and perhaps even vernacular poetry. In this criticism, we shall also see how Petrarch considers his brother as if he were dead (indeed, as he *was*, inasmuch as he had died to the

[878] *Fam.*, X 5, 3; X 3, 5; X 3, 11.
[879] *Fam.*, XVI 9, 8, "quibus nec dies nec nox tota suffecerat?"
[880] *ibid.*
[881] *Fam.*, XVI 8, 11.

saeculum upon entering the cloister)[882], and certain friends as if they were brothers.[883] Lelio is one such person who, if we were not so busy in Rome, would be closer to Petrarch as any brother could ever be. I do not necessarily hypothesize any jealousy or rancour on Gherardo's part towards Lelio. I do not exclude, however, that the greater *laetitia* which Gherardo supposedly felt after his conversation with Petrarch might not be just as much a part of the literary nature of the letter as the encounter with the five classical Roman pilgrims.

The implicit intention of the letter would seem to be the attempt to set up a strong contrast between two walks of life. On the one hand, Petrarch very briefly alludes to Gherardo who, at the age of thirty-five,[884] *nel mezzo del cammin*, had chosen to give up fighting and give up poetry, in favour of static life within the confines of the Carthusian cloister. On the other hand, in order not to explicitly denigrate Gherardo's life choice, Petrarch openly exalts the opposite walk of life, that of five pilgrims. Like in so much of Petrarch's literary re-elaboration, from Laura to his own image in front of posterity, it does not matter how much of the description of these women is based on fact or fiction. What *is* important is that, in opposition to Gherardo, who may well represent inert western cloistered monasticism, these women magnificently represent Petrarch's conception of *Romanitas*. They are out there on the road of life, as he is himself, with all the difficulties and dangers this might entail, winding their way down to Compostela and an ever-greater understanding of Godhead. What is important is not the money, stability or safety they might pick up half way along the road, *nel mezzo del cammin*, but the peace they may find when and if they ever get back to Rome and, after death, to the second Jerusalem in Heaven.

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[882] Cf. Constable, *Monachisme*, 1979, p.7.
[883] Cf. Fam., IX 2. See also, Lokaj 2000c.
[884] Gherardo was born in 1307 and entered the Carthusian Order in 1342 when he was thirty-five.

The *Familiaris* XVI 9 *Ad Zenobium Florentinum, commendatio conventus Montis Rivi Cartusiensis.*

The letter bears no eschatocollon, but seeing that the next letter, also addressed to Zanobi, is dated 28 April 1353, it is plausible to think that Petrarch wrote it between 24 and 28 April.

Even though the addressee and the aim of this letter (the *commendatio*) are very different from those of the last letter, there is a natural and consequential succession from the letter to Lelio to this one to Zanobi. Not only are both letters about Montrieux, but Petrarch uses this second letter to strengthen the concept of Montrieux's *medietas*. That is to say, whereas in the *Familiaris* XVI 8 *Ad Lelium* Montrieux is *nel mezzo del cammin* for those on a pilgrimage from Rome to Compostela, now, in the *Familiaris* XVI 9 *Ad Zanobium*, Montrieux is *vie medium* for those going from Avignon, the latest Babylon, to Rome. The direction is the opposite, but Montrieux's *medietas* remains unchanged. Montrieux's *medietas* is stressed in the very incipit of the letter:

> A Babilone novissima Niceam Vari Italiamque petentibus **vie medio** locus est dextrorsum decem passuum milibus submotus interque nemorosos montes et montanos rivos abditus et e situ ipso dictus ut arbitror. Mons Rivus enim loco nomen, domus antiqua Cartusie et prope ab illius ordinis fundata primordiis.

I hypothesise that here Petrarch introduces a semiological parallel between the founding of Montrieux and his own relationship with his brother. I come to this hypothesis for two reasons. In the first place, after his own version of the founding of Montrieux operated by two brothers, Petrarch immediately writes to Zanobi about Gherardo. Gherardo, however, is only mentioned as "germanus", and not *frater*, in apposition with "carissimum unicumque pignus" (my most dear and only brother). Such designation places the emphasis back on Petrarch who already

occupies the salient position at the beginning of the paragraph with "Illic ego, [...] habeo". The rhetorical and lexical choices of the paragraph immediately following the first one containing Petrarch's version of the founding legend present, therefore, the two sons of Petracco together. Furthermore, the ideal programmatic reader of the *Familiares* had already read the *Familiaris* XVI 2 (which we, however, shall see below) in which Gherardo is presented as the *reformator* of Montrieux, that is, as Petrarch's brother and second founder of Montrieux. In the second place, the argumentation I have followed in analysing the last few letters has repeatedly found a dichotomy between Vaucluse and Montrieux as the only two viable alternatives to Avignon in the period before it becomes possible to return from exile to Italy. In a word, seeing that Petrarch's version of the founding legend of Montrieux has little to do with the *commendatio* to Zanobi, except, perhaps, in making an appeal to him for its traditional austerity, it seems more plausible to interpret this version of the legend as an introduction to the next paragraph dealing with Petrarch and Gherardo.

The founding of Montrieux:

In telling his friend in Naples about the foundation of the Carthusian monastery, Petrarch realises that the various versions of the foundation differ greatly, "Alii quidem aliter narrant".[885] He decides, therefore, to refer to Zanobi what he himself had heard, declining, however, any responsibility for its truthfulness.[886]

Petrarch's version:

There were once two merchant sailors from Genoa. One would sail east while the other would sail west. They would leave at the same time and somehow manage to

[885] *Fam.*, XVI 9, 2.
[886] *ibid.*, "Alii quidem aliter narrant; fides, ut dici solet, penes auctores maneat; ego referam quod audivi".

arrive back in the port of Genoa at the same time. Here they would calculate their earnings and then set off again. The two Genoese brothers had done this several times and had accumulated great wealth when the one coming back from the east discovered that his brother had not come back from the west but had, instead, dropped anchor in Marseilles. The east-bound brother sends him letter after letter, but to no avail. He decides, therefore, to go to Marseilles himself. He finds that his brother is "almost a different person"[887] inasmuch as he has changed his thoughts and attentions (mutatis curis ac studiis) and has become "less active than usual".[888] The west-bound brother answers that he had had enough of sailing and "no longer wanted to entrust his life to the winds".[889] As far as he was concerned, his east -bound brother could do what he wanted, for he had reached his port and had built a home on the shore, or better, on the threshold of Heaven where he might rest before entering the House of God. He then takes his east-bound brother to the monastery which is placed "inter asperrimas silvas et secretissima in valle".[890] The east-bound brother is so overwhelmed by his brother's devotion that he too decides to build a hermitage for himself on a nearby hill. This, according to Petrarch, would explain the dual foundation of Montrieux, that is, the co-existence of Montrieux-le-Vieux and the Chartreuse de Montrieux-le-Jeune.

The official version of the *Annales Ordinis Cartusiensis*:

The *Annales ordinis Carthusiensis ab anno* 1084 *ad annum* 1429, which transcribe the *Cartularium* of Montrieux itself, point out very succinctly that the official tradition is rather different to Petrarch's. It reads:

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[887] *Fam.*, XVI 9, 3, "pene alius".
[888] *ibid.*, "ut solito segnior".
[889] *ibid.*, "nolle se amplius vento vitam credere".
[890] *Fam.*, XVI 9, 4.

> Vir quidam nobilis natione Italus, cuius nomen hactenus latuit, gravi ac periculoso morbo detentus est ad Sanctam Balmam delatus, voto se obstrinxit cartusiam in loco Sanctae Balmae proximiori se se fundaturum, si sanctitatem recuperaret. Qua statim non sine miraculo obtenta, omnia bona sua pro domus huius fundatione contulit, induto postea ibidem monachali habitu.[891]

The only point in common with Petrarch's version is an explicit indication of an un-named Italian origin. What is different is the absence of any mention of the city of Genoa and of the two sea-faring brothers. It would seem, however, that in the elaboration of the episode, two brothers do actually have something to do with the official founding of Montrieux. The *Annales* transcribe an official act which seems to have been recorded by a notary at the time:

> Anno MCXXIII et die VIII mensis Maii, Domini de Soleriis Gaufridus, Hugo et Fulco fratres, nec non uxores prædictorum Hugonis et Fulconis concesserunt habitatoribus Montis Rivi, Monachis et Conversis, ut possideant terram. Hoc autem dederunt Domno Benedicto tunc Priori et Domno Aicardo procuratori, præsentibus Conversis Michaele, Petro et Johanne, in manu et præsentia Domini Guillermi Tolon. episcopi, etc.; præsentibus Hugone Radulphi, Petro, Johanne Columbi, et me Johanne Bernardi notario, qui his signum meum apposui.[892]

The *Annales* present these two brothers, Hugo and Fulco, described as "patriæ Nobiles" and as "Fundatores sive potius benefactores præcipui".[893] It is plausible to deduce that Petrarch might have contaminated, whether knowingly or not, the legendary founding of Montrieux with its official one.[894]

Petrarch's version has been defined as an "artifice littéraire" and a "petite histoire pittoresque" completely devoid of authenticity.[895] Indeed, when narratologically analysed, the account of the foundation of Montrieux has very little

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[891] *Ann. Ord. Cart.*, p.220.
[892] *ibid.*, pp.220-221.
[893] *ibid.*, p.220.
[894] For a fuller discussion of the differences between the sources concerning the foundation of Montrieux, see Boyer, 1980, pp.149-172. For the Petrarchan version, see also Cochin, 1975, pp.60-63.

indeed to do with the *commendatio* itself. Why talk to Zanobi about the distant past when it is the present that needs addressing? My hypothesis is that the Petrarchan version of the foundation somehow reflects the life choices of both Petrarch and his own brother Gherardo. Let us see, first of all, the possible parallels.

1. The Italian background of the two Genoese brothers immediately suggests a 'nationalistic' and linguistic parallel with Petrarch and Gherardo, who have also both moved to Provence.
2. The *concordia* between the two Genoese, represented by the expressions, "simul domo proficisci"[896]; "in patria convenire"[897]; and "unanimes fundatores"[898], might be an implicit reference to the *concordia* characterising the relationship which Petrarch and Gherardo had had in their early youth in Provence and in their university days up until their final departure from Bologna (to which we shall return when analysing the 'meministi series' in the *Familiaris* X 3).
3. The west-bound brother 'dropping anchor in Marseilles' might refer to the fact that Montrieux is in the diocese of Marseilles and Gherardo now thinks he is *in portu*.
4. The futile letter-sending of the east-bound brother to the west-bound one, who does not answer, would suggest a classical reference, which we shall see in the last letter to Gherardo, the *Familiaris* XVIII 5, concerning the Ovidian myth of Byblis and Caunus.
5. The west-bound brother as "almost a different person" conjures up a picture of Gherardo who, as we shall see later in the same 'meministi series', was once a 'carefree', young man in love with vernacular poetry,

[895] Boyer 1980, pp. 156, 165-166.
[896] *Fam.*, XVI 9, 2.
[897] *ibid.*

women, fashion, his own looks, etc, but who is now the penitent Carthusian monk. It also prepares for the second idea of the "sudden change" (repente mutatus) in Gherardo to be introduced in the following paragraph and developed further in the first letter actually addressed to Gherardo, the *Familiaris* X 3.

6. The west-bound brother as "less active than usual" (ut solito segnior) is an obvious allusion to Gherardo's *otium*.
7. The west-bound brother who has had enough of sailing is Gherardo who believes that he has retired to the cloister thinking that it is the safety of the final port of life (again, *in portu*).
8. The west-bound brother does not intervene for the benefit of others and is characterised by indifference and a lack of empathy towards his fellow human beings. This is similar to Gherardo who "despicit ab alto" and remains untouched by the plight of fellow humanity. Indeed, as far as their respective brothers are concerned who are already 'in port', both the east-bound brother of the founding legend and Petrarch could do whatever they liked. It would not have made the slightest difference.
9. The "monasterium [...] inter asperrimas silvas et secretissima in valle"[899] describing the first foundation is obviously a semantically equivalent variation of "locus [...] interque nemorosos montes et montanos rivos abditus"[900] describing Montrieux as it was in 1353.

If Petrarch's version of the foundation of Montrieux is a combination of the various elements contained in the official version, then a certain omission becomes salient. I refer to the site of the *mutatio vitae* or conversion of the west-bound brother, that is,

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[898] *Fam.*, XVI 9, 5.
[899] *Fam.*, XVI 9, 4.
[900] *Fam.*, XVI 9,1.

Sainte-Baume.[901] The *Annales*, as we have seen, specifically state that the vow to build a hermitage and convert to anchoritism depended upon a miraculous healing "ad Sanctam Balmam". This is where, according to local legend, Mary Magdalene had spent thirty years in penance after having moved from Palestine to Provence.[902] Her body had been miraculously found again in the crypt of the church of St-Maximin by Charles II d'Anjou of Naples on 9 December 1279, after which devotion to Mary Magdalene had experienced a real boom.[903] It was probably in this renewed fervour of devotion to the Magdalene that the traditions concerning the founding of Montrieux had been altered. When Petrarch invents, or better, re-arranges the founding legend to introduce the idea of west-bound and east-bound sea-travel, he chooses to privilege the brother who had gone west. When analysed according to traditional mediaeval east-west distinctions, this fact alone is of fundamental importance. Going east meant going towards Jerusalem, Christ and the Light. An east-bound merchant-sailor should presumably have had a better chance to come into contact with doctrines, religious persons and *loca sancta* which were more likely to favour a possible conversion. Petrarch's mythopoiesis privileges, instead, a Ulyssean merchant-sailor who goes west, that is, towards the end of the known world, *finis terrae*, death and darkness, where, presumably, at the beginning of the twelfth century, he would not have had quite the same chances of conversion as his brother who had gone east. Yet it is the west-bound brother who first understands the necessity of conversion and anchoritism, thus founding a long monastic tradition. It was by going west, that is, going in the direction of the Cave of Mary Magdalene and, perhaps, Santiago de Compostela (otherwise known as *finis terrae*), that Petrarch's version, and in part, also the official version, indicate a

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[901] For the legend of the founding of Montrieux in association with the Sainte-Baume, see also Saxer, pp.131-132, 210-211, 294-295.
[902] Cf. Lokaj 2000g.

revolutionary shift in hagiographical possibility. Concerning the legend on Mary Magdalene and her life in Provence as a solitary penant, Petrarch explicitly refers to the cave of Mary Magdalene in the second letter he addresses to Gherardo, the *Familiaris* X 4.[904] We have also seen, however, that he refers to such a cave in the parallel he draws between Montrieux and Vaucluse through the *Familiares* X 4 and XV 3. In this light, given that the two major centres of devotion of Mary Magdalene in Provence were Aix and St-Maximin,[905] we might also interpret the pilgrimage of the five noble Roman ladies winding their way down to Compostela as devotees to the saint, just like Salimbene's *Dominae Albae*. After all, Petrarch had described his *Matronae* as "inter Aquensem coloniam et Maximino sacram domum".[906] Given the importance discussed in the third chapter of Mary Magdalene as a model of perfectibility for the true sinners of the world,[907] if we are right to see a parallel between Petrarch's version of the founding of Montrieux and his own narrative concerning his relationship with his own brother, Gherardo, the *reformator* of Montrieux, then it is clear that Petrarch cannot cross over the *durum limen* of *Cartusia* and follow his brother into the cloister. That is, Petrarch could never have completed the parallelism because Gherardo had not fully completed the re-founding inasmuch as he had not grasped the real importance of Mary Magdalene as a model of penance. This is why Petrarch prefers Vaucluse, because only here can he be like the penitent sinner and saint.

Petrarch presents his own version of the legend when commending Montrieux to Zanobi da Strada in 1353 so that Zanobi might in turn intercede on

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[903] *Bibl. Sanct.* Vol. 8, p.1089.
[904] *Fam.*, X 4, 21, "Antrum ubi solitarie degit Monicus, Mons Rivi est, ubi tu nunc monasticam vitam agis inter speluncas et nemora, vel ipsum antrum in quo Maria Magdalena penitentiam egit, quod monasterio tuo vicinum est".
[905] *Bibl. Sanct.* Vol. 8, p.1089.
[906] *Fam.*, XVI 8, 1.
[907] Cf. Lokaj 2000g.

behalf of Montrieux before Niccolò Acciaiuoli and Luigi d'Anjou, the current King of Naples, for protection of the small charterhouse from the local Provençal tyrants.[908] The king and queen of Naples were respectively the count and countess of Provence inasmuch as Provence had been under the House of Anjou ever since Beatrix, the daughter of Raimond Berengarius V, had brought it with her in dowry (the "gran dota" of which Dante speaks[909]) in her marriage to Charles I of Anjou in 1245. The Charterhouse of Montrieux had always lived in relative peace for as long as it continued to make appeals to the successors of Charles d'Anjou, namely Charles II and Robert. They had, however, stopped making direct appeals to the king of Naples ever since a certain local priest, who was particularly devoted to the Carthusian Order, had been elected bishop of Marseilles. It is possible to glean from the letter that Petrarch considers this decision rather foolish. Down through the decades and the generations, the royal house of Anjou had never wavered in showing its support and protection of Montrieux, yet the monks decide to confide in one single man, destined to die soon, who would be leaving local politics in the hands of tyrants, "ad imitationem exemplorum malorum". Because of the "semplicitas" of these "pauperes Cristi", the protection or "munus" of the House of Anjou, whom Petrarch calls "optimi reges", is made obsolete, that is, "obsolefactum atque antiquatum". The *commendatio* is an attempt to reinstate this "munus".[910]

Petrarch writes that the king should intervene because the peasants living around the convent of Montrieux have complained that their fields, vineyards and

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[908] *Fam.*, XVI 9: Zanobi da Strada was a mediocre poet from Florence who frequented, together with Boccaccio, the court of Naples. These tyrants were the bishops of Marseilles and their secular vassals including the lords of Solliès, d'Evenos, de Signes, Tourves, Valbelle and the Knights Templar of Beaulieu (Cochin, 1975, p.124). Petrarch writes to his friend in Naples because the King and Queen of Naples were the count and countess of Provence inasmuch as Provence was under the house of the Anjou. The monastery of Montrieux had always enjoyed their particular protection. See also *Fam.*, XVI 10. For the identification of the "king of Naples" in Luigi d'Anjou, the second husband of Giovanna I d'Anjou, see Lokaj 2000d.

[909] *Purg.*, XX 61.

[910] *Fam.*, XVI 9, 13-14.

gardens have been trampled to pieces by the grazing herds of the local tyrants. These peasants disturb the monks of Montrieux in their singing, praying, eating and sleeping. What Petrarch does *not* state is that Montrieux itself has not really been harmed directly at all by the evil actions of the local lords. It is as if the king were supposed to intervene solely because the monks could not fully enjoy their meals or get a decent night's sleep. The fact that Petrarch uses the negative hyperboles, such as "parcissima cenula" and "somnus brevissimus", only serves to sharpen the sarcasm, especially with the superlatives in *–issima/us* and the diminutive "cenula".[911]

The other main point, which Petrarch chooses *not* to mention, is that the monastic activities listed do not include anything of an intellectual nature. Despite the fame of the Carthusian Order in the transmission of culture and their meticulousness, Gherardo and his *confratres* obviously did *not* indulge in the collation of manuscripts, reading or copying. These activities were not listed because, as one might infer, they had not been interrupted. On this very point, Cochin, who otherwise praises the Carthusian order, admits that Montrieux was a rather rudimentary monastic settlement. Its *seminarium* contained little more than a bible and a primer, which were, furthermore, very seldom read.[912] And yet Petrarch writes that the king should help the monks protect the "calicum amictuum et librorum bona copia"[913] which the monastery supposedly held.[914] The "librorum bona copia" must be interpreted as a negative hyperbole and, therefore, as an ironic falsehood. Furthermore, if this fact in itself is false, consequently, the real urgency to intervene on behalf of Montrieux must also be false. Why bother the king over

[911] On the use of such diminutives to increase sarcasm, see Lokaj 2000.
[912] Cochin, 1975, pp.98-101.
[913] *Fam.*, XVI 9, 16.
[914] Chalices and reeds were the only ornaments a Charterhouse could regularly hold. Cf. King, 1955, p.11.

the sheep and vegetable patches of a few peasants, when, moreover, the monastery itself was being left to carry on with its divine, intellectual inertia? In this light, we can safely conclude that the letter itself was probably never actually sent. Furthermore, we might also hypothesise that the moral and narrative function of the *commendatio* was actually a denouncement of Montrieux, where an equilibrium between religious, political and intellectual activities was desperately lacking. In other words, Montrieux is really the "direptum Cristi tugurium" Petrarch describes it as.[915]

The last main point to be made in the light of this letter is the question of Gherardo's conversion. Indeed, the fact that Petrarch creates the parallel between the legend of the Genoese merchant sailors, on the one hand, and his own legend with his brother, on the other, and yet fails to complete the parallel by not entering Montrieux can be interpreted not so much as a question of conversion or of non conversion, but rather, of *how* to convert. The second paragraph of the letter, which creates the parallel between the two legends just mentioned, opens with a solemn description of the suddenness with which Gherardo had undergone his *mutatio vitae*. Petrarch writes:

> Illic ego, quod minime novum audis, carissimum unicumque pignus habeo germanum, in quo liquido cernitur quid est quod ait Psalmista «mutatio dextere Excelsi». Ita enim repente mutatus, ita ex adolescente vago et lubrico in virum stabilem atque constantem versus, ita denique de virtute in virtutem in dies alacrior ascendens, mutate mentis ardorem decenni iam perseverantia comprobavit, ut qui olim timori cureque michi fuerat, nunc stupori et gaudio sit ingenti.[916]

Gherardo is suddenly transformed from a wavering youth always on the brink of falling into depravity into a man characterised by stability and constancy. It is this change which has allowed him to enter the Carthusian cloister and become

[915] *Fam.*, XVI 9, 17.

part of the "grex angelicus",[917] which recalls the "angeli Dei in terra",[918] where Gherardo was described as one of the "dominice apes" and "bene nata gens".[919] At face value the language would seem to be of praise. A closer analysis reveals, however, quite a different intention in Petrarch's mind. First of all, the presence and order of the two adjectives, *vagus* and *lubricus*, in the expression "ex adolescente vago et lubrico" (from an uncertain, slippery adolescent) can also be found in *Octavius* by Minucius Felix, who writes: "errantem vagam lubricam sententiam".[920] Minucius, who depends on Virgil's description of Allecto and the snake used to infect Amata,[921] is obviously referring to an erroneous judgement implicitly judged in turn as diabolical. The present participle and the two adjectives used are fundamentally equivalent semantically. Analogously, Petrarch uses "vagus" and "lubricus" as a type of hendiadyc dittology which will be mirrored in the following hendiadys, "vir stabilis atque constans".[922] The two adjectives are, furthermore, used in a way remarkably similar to the expression which Cicero uses in his oration against the corrupt governor of Sicily, Verres. Cicero writes:

> tu sociorum atque amicorum ad ea convivia matres familias adhibuisti, tu inter eius modi mulieres praetextatum tuum filium, nepotem meum, conlocavisti, ut **aetati maxime lubricae atque incertae** exempla nequitiae parentis vita praeberet[923]

The similarity with Cicero's denouncement of the influence of Verres's corruption of his nephew and the concomitant destruction of the Roman ships would see Gherardo's initial state as typical of misguided youth. We shall see the

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[916] *Fam.*, XVI 9, 6.
[917] *Fam.*, XVI 9, 8.
[918] *De otio*, p.568.
[919] *De otio*, p.570.
[920] *Oct.* 16, 1.
[921] *Aen.*, 7, 353, "innectitque comas et membris lubricus errat."
[922] *Fam.*, XVI 9, 6.
[923] Verr. 2, 5, 52 § 137. That *vagus* is synonymous with *incertus* is given is other contexts, such as in the *Carmen paschale* II 221-223 by Sedulius who writes, "Humanas piscari animas, quae **lubrica** mundi/ gaudea sectantes tamquam **vaga** caerula ponti/ cetatque praecipitis bramant **incerta** profundi."

adjective *lubricus* used again by Petrarch for Gherardo in the second letter he sends to him, the *Familiaris* X 4, where Petrarch refers to Gherardo's "cor lubricum".[924] This period of Gherardo's life was so misguided, in fact, that Petrarch then states that Gherardo was a constant source of "timor et cura".[925] The fact that Gherardo was a source of such fear and worry for Petrarch, who always defines himself as an unrepenting sinner, would seem to want to indicate a dire state of sin. Indeed, such was the transformation in Gherardo that he constitutes a living example of the expression coined by King David, "mutatio dextere Excelsi", that is, 'the change of the right hand of the Most High'.[926] This change in Gherardo is so profound and sudden that now, for Petrarch, it causes "stupor et gaudium ingens".[927] The change is also stressed via repetition. That is, *mutatus* is used three times in the space of two sentences: "mutatio dextere Excelsi"; "repente mutatus"; "mutate mentis".[928] Indeed, Gherardo's spiritual 'mutation' probably provides the reason why Petrarch had wanted to use Lucan's term, "mutatores", for his account of the two Genoese merchant sailors.[929] In other words, Gherardo had simply changed his merchandise, or had traded in his old merchandise for the cloister.

The radical, sudden transformation in Gherardo, underlined also in the "promptius" of *Familiaris* X 3,[930] is reminiscent, therefore, of the usual scheme of *mutatio vitae* to be found in so many hagiographical accounts. That is to say, in order to get audiences to grasp the radical, profound, and saintly character of true conversion, most mediaeval compilers of *vitae sanctorum* stressed the *un*-saintliness

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[924] *Fam.*, X 4, 21. Cf. *Fam.*, XXIII 5, 1, "adolescentie lubricum iter ac libidinum et irarum nebulas supergressa celoque propinquior, quecunque suspicere reliqua etas solet, iam sub pedibus habet ac despicit."
[925] *Fam.*, XVI 9, 6.
[926] *Ps.* 77, 11.
[927] *ibid.*
[928] *Fam.*, XVI 9, 6.
[929] *Fam.*, XVI 9, 2.
[930] *Fam.*, X 3, 21, "Et ut hec leviora pretream, recordare etiam, quo **promptius** e tanta Caribdi liberatus dignas Deo gratis agas [*scil.* Gherardus]".

of the saints before conversion. Paul had been a tax collector before his journey to Damascus during which he was suddenly so changed that he took on the name Paul. St Francis, for example, was made out in the later biographies to have been much more pleasure loving than he probably ever was in real life. For the Middle Ages, the major ideological model for such hagiographical exaggeration was St Augustine who, as an "inquies adulescens", committed "foeditates et carnales corruptiones" as he "dared go wild in several, shady loves".[931] Gherardo's sudden conversion would seem to fit into this "Augustinian" model.

It is possible to glean from the wording of the letter that the emphasis of such a radical metamorphosis is indeed on the wondrous working of the Lord. In other words, it would seem that by divine intervention, Gherardo has been transformed not by his *own* desires or actions, but, rather, by a miracle. For Petrarch, this was at the basis of his own implicit denunciation of Montrieux. If conversion depended upon divine intervention or, worse still, on predestination, as we explored in the *De otio*, then what role could learning possibly have?

Perhaps this is the reason for a certain intertextual contradiction. I refer to the fact that Petrarch describes Gherardo in his post-conversion stage as "ascending more quickly day by day from virtue to virtue".[932] The contradiction lies in the fact that in the coeval *De otio* and *Familiaris* IV 1, whereas Gherardo certainly does climb Mt Ventoux more quickly than Petrarch, he does not, however, go 'from virtue to virtue'. In the analysis of the *Familiaris* IV 1 we saw, instead, that it was Petrarch who had found difficulty amid the lower-lying hills – allegorically representing the lesser virtues – and who, as a result, had climbed up to Sion and to

[931] *conf.*, 2, 1, "Exarsi enim aliquando satiari inferis in adulescentia et silvescere ausus sum variis et umbrosis amoribus".
[932] *Fam.*, XVI 9, 6, "ita denique de virtute in virtutem in dies alacrior ascendens".

the Son "de virtute in virtutem".[933] Indeed, as *Psalm* 83 had taught Petrarch, "Ibunt de virtute in virtutem; videbitur Deus deorum in Sion", he would be able to get up to the peak of Sion, though described as "arduus et angustus et scrupeus"[934] and, therefore, as a "durum opus et laboriosum", by using "summa vis" and "omne studium".[935] Only in this way would the scaling of Mt Ventoux prove to be "salubre".[936]

In the analysis of the letters directly addressed to Gherardo, we shall see how Petrarch wants to try to make up for the lack in intellectual activity experienced in Montrieux. However, perhaps it is possible to glean from this letter that he thought it was really only a waste of time. I refer to his description of the time elapsed since his 1347 visit. Petrarch writes:

> Hunc pridie revisurus, quem iam quinquennio magis interviseram et quem si in Italiam rediero, quandiu sim intervisurus nescio, paucosque ipse michi vix furatus dies, locum adii.[937]

Gherardo had entered Montrieux in 1343 ca. Petrarch had made his first visit to him in 1347, that is, counting in Roman style, a five-year period or *quinquennium*. Seeing that he does not know when he would ever see Gherardo again, especially if he succeeded in returning to Italy, he visits him. The clue to how Petrarch really felt about this visit is, however, not to be gleaned from the rhetorical question Petrarch askes Zanobi, that is, whether Gherardo cried or whether Petrarch had been welcomed cordially by all the monks, or whether they had all come out to see him off, *et cetera*. Though presented as givens, these things are left to Zanobi's intuition

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[933] Cf. Lokaj 1998a, pp.465-479.
[934] *De otio*, p.736.
[935] *ibid.*
[936] *ibid.*
[937] *Fam.*, XVI 9, 7.

to understand.[938] Petrarch does not trust his inkpot enough to be more explicit about his time there.

What he does explicitly say, however, is that it was as if he had had to "steal a few days" from (for?) himself in order to visit his brother – "paucosque ipse michi vix furatus dies". We have already gathered from the *Familiaris* XVI 8 that Petrarch had decided not to get to Montrieux the night after his meeting with the five Roman pilgrims, where, had he wanted to, it might have been possible to reach Montrieux that night and, therefore, sleep there. Here in the *Familiaris* XVI 9 Petrarch states very clearly that he only stayed one day and a night – "nec dies nec nox tota".[939] The "few days" he has almost "stolen from himself" must be inclusive of the journey from and back to Vaucluse. But, even if it were an ethic dative in the sense of 'for his own benefit', why say "to steal"? The answer might be given by the ordering of the *Familiares* themselves. The following *Familiaris* XVI 10 is also addressed to Zanobi and begins with a repetition of Petrarch's desire to intercede on Montrieux's behalf. The brevity of the letter, however, together with the fact that it does not produce any new information whatsoever or even further describe Montrieux, makes it plausible to classify the letter as a 'filler'. Petrarch had decided to order his *res familiares* into a series of twenty-four books where there would be exactly three hundred and fifty letters. I believe this to be a letter which was never sent, written, as it probably was, out of pure structural necessity.

The following letter is quite a different case. The *Familiaris* XVI 11, addressed to Francesco Nelli, is about how precious time is for Petrarch. Indeed, the

[938] *Fam.*, XVI 9, 7-8, "Quid expectas audire? Pias fratris lacrimas an illic agentium Cristi servorum humiles congressus, sanctam hospitalitem salubresque sermones, quid dixerim, quid audierim, quid viderim, quid ibi me presente, quid abeunte gestum sit; ut totus ille grex angelicus sacro sub lare circumfusus hospiti nullum devoti obsequii genus omiserit; ut digredientem comitati omnes usque ad extremum limen, fraterque ipse cum paucis longius usque ad radicem montis silvoso calle prosecutus, raptim pro tempore multa monens, multa rogans, multa denuntians, quibus nec dies nec nox tota suffecerat? Hec ego, inquam, omnia ingenio tuo potius extimanda quam calamo meo exponenda commiserim."

very title reads, "Ad Franciscum Sanctorum Apostolorum, quam cara res sit tempus". Petrarch writes:

> Vellem posse dicere nullum me diem perdidisse; multos perdidi utinamque non annos. Illud dixisse non metuam: nullum, quod meminerim, diem ignorans perdidi; non elapsa sunt tempora sed erepta.[940]

In the fairly long reflection that ensues about the precious nature of time and how he regrets to have lost so much of it in the past, Petrarch now cherishes what little he has left. It is at this point that he uses the Davidic line used in the letter to Zanobi about Montrieux. Realising how precious time really is *is* the real change of the right hand of the Lord - "Hec mutatio dextere Excelsi".[941] The demonstrative pronoun, "Hec", especially in the mind of someone reading the *Familiares* as a *liber*, refers back to the last time in which the expression was used, that is, in reference to Gherardo's conversion. The pronoun, therefore, suggests that, if anything, Petrarch's intimate understanding concerning the importance of time and how to use his life is the real volte-face, that *this* is a real conversion, *not* Gherardo's. We might infer that, according to Petrarch's implicit feelings concerning his brother's position, conversion was not a matter of entering the cloister, being tonsured and singing, but rather a much more gradual process of intellectual acquisition.

The general stance adopted in the letter written from Milan to Francesco Nelli recalls the famous line by Dante: "ché perder tempo a chi piú sa piú spiace".[942] Indeed, in the post-conversion mode in this letter, Petrarch's new life under the

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[939] *Fam.*, XVI 9, 8.
[940] *Fam.*, XVI 11, 3.
[941] *Fam.*, XVI 11, 5.
[942] *Purg.*, 3, 78. For this recurring motif in Dante, cf. *If.* 11, 13-15; *Purg.*, 12, 84-85; 18, 103-105; 23, 1-9; *Cv.* 4, 2, 10.

protection of the Visconti family could well be read in antithesis to Gherardo's from the following three points of view:

1. Gherardo's type of *solitudo/ otium* - Petrarch's new-found *solitudo/ otium*[943]
2. Gherardo's life inside a Carthusian cloister – Petrarch's life just outside the Basilica of St Ambrose[944]
3. Montrieux and Gherardo on the Provençal side of the Alps - Milan and Petrarch (finally) on the Italian side[945]

The *mutatio* regarding Petrarch, which just happens to coincide with Petrarch's move to Milan, is of an intellectual order, whereas Gherardo's was merely a miracle which required no effort on his part at all. If it is methodologically correct to consider the *ordo* and the consequent groupings of the *Familiares* as meaningful, as I believe to be the case, then, perhaps, the contiguity of the *Familiaris* XVI 11 in relationship to the *commendatio* of Montrieux to Zanobi might very well be taken to indicate that the *commendatio* and Petrarch's visit were a waste of time, or, in other words, that Petrarch had really 'stolen' those precious days from his own life.

Before passing on to the analysis of the letters actually addressed to Gherardo, let us pause on one last aspect of this last letter in which Gherardo is mentioned. Petrarch invites Zanobi to imagine how his stay in Montrieux was. Even though most modern critics have taken this description at face value, I believe that the rhetorical nature of the question does not allow us to do so. Petrarch would like us to believe that these and other positive things happened, but can we really be sure? If it were true, then why should Petrarch invite Zanobi to sharpen his mind in

[943] *Fam.*, XVI 11, 9.
[944] *Fam.*, XVI 11, 11, "Habito interim in extremo urbis ad occiduam plagam secus Ambrosii basilicam. Saluberrima domus est, levum ad ecclesie latus".
[945] *Fam.*, XVI 11, 11, "retro autem menia urbis et frondentes late agros atque Alpes prospicit nivosas estate iam exacta."

order to weigh up these things – "omnia ingenio tuo potius extimanda"?[946] What Petrarch would like his less-discerning readers to imagine is that his brother cried "pious tears", that Gherardo's fellow monks had given him a humble but warm welcome, saintly hospitality and edifying advice. More than to what he said, heard and saw, Petrarch alludes to what happened while he was there and, above all, to what happened as he was leaving. Petrarch writes:

> ut totus ille grex angelicus sacro sub lare circumfusus hospiti nullum devoti obsequii genus omiserit; ut digredientem comitati omnes usque ad extremum limen, fraterque ipse cum paucis longius usque ad radicem montis silvoso calle prosecutus, raptim pro tempore multa monens, multa rogans, multa denuntians, quibus nec dies nec nox tota suffecerat.[947]

First of all, as the ideal reader will have noticed, this is not the first time in which Petrarch has been "surrounded". The verb *circumfundi* is used in the preceding letter to describe how the five Roman pilgrims had surrounded Petrarch, making him, as I had added, "sesto fra cotanto senno".[948] The exquisitely classical expression, "sacro sub lare", also recalls the classical reference to Roman ladies. The scene of Petrarch's final farewell to Gherardo is a mirror image of the encounter with the Roman pilgrims in the prior letter. As such, it is necessarily also its opposite. Indeed, whereas the Roman pilgrims had surrounded Petrarch "familiarius" in order to speak to him "fidentius", the brothers of Montrieux use a formal mode by affording him "obsequia" and where Gherardo had spoken not about himself, but about Lelio. Whereas the Roman pilgrims were on their way to Compostela, that is, "ad hispanum Jacobi limen",[949] these monks are limited by their own "extremum limen". That the term *limen* is fundamental in Petrarch's appraisal of his relationship with his brother is given by the fact that, in *Familiaris* XVI 8,11,

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[946] *Fam.*, XVI 9, 8.
[947] *ibid.*
[948] *Fam.*, XVI 8, 3.
[949] *Fam.*, XVI 8, 2.

Petrarch refers to their seeing each other again after the "quinquennium" as a "postliminium", that is, as a 'return behind a threshold'. Indeed, it is the "durum limen" of Carthusian monasticism, which we will see in the next section dedicated to the *Familiares* while analysing Petrarch's exposition of the first *Bucolicum Carmen, Parthenias*, that we will understand that Gherardo's "limen" is "durum" because Silvius alias Petrarch does not want to cross it.

Apart from the narrative mode necessary in such accounts, whereby Petrarch inevitably uses the verbs, 'to say', 'to hear' and 'to see', there is also a parallel use of verbs between the two parting groups. That is:

Fam., XVI 8 formidinem renovarunt	quererem	nuntiant[950]
Fam., XVI 9 monens	rogans	denuntians[951]

Furthermore, whereas in the *Fam.*, XVI 8 Petrarch had stated that his and Gherardo's desire to talk was "*longum* pro tempore",[952] in the next letter Gherardo has to say many things in a hurry at the very last minute, that is, "*raptim* pro tempore".[953] As we have seen from our brief analysis of the following letter in order among the *res familiares*, that is, the *Familiaris* XVI 11 on how precious time is, obviously Gherardo had not used him time well.

On the question of time and understanding, perhaps the allusion to Dante above[954] is not only helpful from the conceptual point of view, but also as a matter of inspiration. Indeed, it would be tempting to want to compare the fuller context concerning Dante's encounter with Manfredi and the ex-communicated souls of *Purgatory* with Petrarch's description of his last farewell to Gherardo and the "grex angelicus" of Montrieux.

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[950] *Fam.*, XVI 8, 3.
[951] *Fam.*, XVI 9, 8.
[952] *Fam.*, XVI 8, 11.
[953] *Fam.*, XVI 9, 8.
[954] See p. 259, n. 942.

«O ben finiti, o già spiriti eletti» [955]
Virgilio incominciò, «per quella pace
ch'i' credo per voi tutti s'aspetti,
ditene dove la montagna giace[956]
sí che possibil sia l'andare in suso;
ché perder tempo a chi piú sa piú spiace».
Come le pecorelle escon del chiuso[957]
a una, a due, a tre, e l'altre stanno
timidette atterrando l'occhio e 'l muso;
e ciò che fa la prima, l'altre fanno,
addossandosi a lei, s'ella s'arresta,
semplici e quete, e lo 'mperché non sanno;
sí vid'io muovere a venir la testa
di quella mandra fortunata allotta,[958]
pudica in faccia e nell'andare onesta.
Come color dinanzi vider rotta
la luce in terra dal mio destro canto,
sí che l'ombra era da me alla grotta,
restaro, e trasser sé in dietro alquanto,
a tutti li altri che venieno appresso,
non sappiendo il perché, fenno altrettanto.[959]

If Petrarch was in any way thinking of these lines, then the immediate exegetical consequence is in the meaning of "grotta" and "montagna". In the Dantean context, "grotta" is taken to mean 'rock' or 'mountain'. It is, therefore, synonymous with "montagna" and "monte". Obviously, the "montagna" in question is the mountain of *Purgatory*, the physical and metaphysical symbol of purification of sin. In other words, "l'andare in suso" describes a journey of penance. In the Petrarchan context, however, there is a problem. The Charterhouse of Montrieux, even today, effectively sits in the middle of a heavily wooded area. Two or three kilometres out of Méounes-les-Montrieux, one must leave all means of transport and proceed on foot for about half an hour up a leafy footpath along the banks of a fast-flowing creek. Even though the toponym 'Montrieux' seems to derive from *monasteriolum*, Petrarch's derivation of the toponym from the local topography, that is, "Mons

[955] Cf. *De otio*, p.568, "angeli Dei in terra [*scil.* whom Christ] predestinavit in numerum electorum".
[956] Together with *Purg.*, 3, 46, "a piè del monte", cf. *Fam.*, XVI 9, 8, "ad radicem montis".
[957] Cf. *Fam.*, XVI 9, 8, the "grex angelicus" coming out of the Carthusian cloister.
[958] Cf. *Fam.*, XVI 9, 8, the "grex angelicus" and *Fam.*, X 3, 2, "fortunatus propositi".

Rivus",[960] also seems to be plausible. Furthermore, the "silvosus callis"[961] he and Gherardo walk along would also seem to correspond to the truth. Even the fact that Gherardo had gone beyond the "extremum limen" of Montrieux corresponds to the truth. Boyer states, in fact, that Gherardo, as a *clericus redditus*, was actually allowed to go outside the Charterhouse and see to certain temporal concerns. Boyer adds, however, that any Charterhouse was only allowed to have one *clericus redditus* at any one time.[962] The fact that Petrarch describes Gherardo as leaving the grounds of Montrieux "cum paucis" is probably, therefore, a falsehood well in line, therefore, with Dante's "pecorelle [...] timidette".[963].

What becomes even more intriguing is the possible allusion, perhaps through the Dantean context, to a mountain and a cave (grotta). The fact is that, whereas Gherardo arrives "ad radicem montis", Petrarch obviously continues. The topography of Montrieux would suggest that the two brothers had reached the bottom of the mountain. The possible allusion beneath the surface of the text might, instead, indicate exactly the opposite, that is, the beginning of a climb upwards. Indeed, Petrarch could rely on the fact that neither Zanobi nor his ideal reader had ever been to Montrieux. The syntagma, "ad radicem montis" is, therefore, left vague in meaning on purpose. Furthermore, as we saw above,[964] Petrarch, in the *De vita solitaria*, describes Montrieux as a generic allusion to western monasticism. Montrieux, therefore, as a toponym, could also be taken not in its physical, Provençal context, but also as a symbol of Benedictine-type monasticism *tout court*.

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[959] *Purg.*, 3, 73-93.
[960] *Fam.*, XVI 9, 1.
[961] *Fam.*, XVI 9, 8.
[962] Boyer, 1980, p.168, n.26, "A l'époque qui nous intéresse (XIVe siècle), le clerc rendu était agrégé à l'ordre cartusien par une profession semblable à celle des religieux de chœur, mais son habit ne comportait pas les bandes latérales, qui sont le signe de la profession. Il n'était pas astreint à la clôture et pouvait être envoyé à l'extérieur pour les affaires temporelles. Il ne pouvait y avoir plus d'un clerc rendu par maison".
[963] *Purg.*, 3, 79-81.
[964] See p. 128, n. 518 & p.224.

In this light, the specific topography of Montrieux is simply not pertinent. If Petrarch was taking the allusion to Dante's "grotta" literally, that is, as a 'cave' and not generically as 'rocks' or 'mount', then the penitential climb to which Petrarch alludes would be the one leading up to the Sainte-Baume located above Montrieux and, therefore, to the cave in which Mary Magdalene supposedly spent thirty years in penance.

In conclusion, an allegorical interpretation of Petrarch's last farewell to Gherardo, thanks to this possible Dantean intertext, would indicate that, on the one hand, through the redeeming qualities of Montrieux and the model offered by St Augustine of radical, sudden conversion, Gherardo has been able to reach the foot of the Mountain of Purgatory, but cannot continue any further. On the other hand, instead, his elder brother, Petrarch the sinner, does not follow the Augustinian scheme of conversion. He chooses, instead, a *modus convertendi* based on gradual intellectual acquisition (*studium*) and is, therefore, now able to continue his climb, cleanse himself of his sins and possibly even reach the top.

The *Familiares* directly addressed to Gherardo

There are six letters directly addressed to Gherardo, a first group of three, the *Familiares* X 3, X 4, X 5, then three others in three consecutive books, the *Familiares* XVI 2, XVII 1 and XVIII 5. I stated in the preliminary considerations that this entire group of six letters seems to constitute an *accessus ad auctorem* in the sense that it introduces Gherardo to divine hermeneutics through the study of poetics, law, philosophy and, finally, all-encompassing theology. Whereas in the *Familiaris* IV 1 Gherardo "molests" his elder brother by asking him to read out loud the passage of St Augustine but is effectively excluded, Petrarch prepares his brother for such a reading and will finally send him a copy of the *Confessions*. Indeed, this type of teaching through letters, that is, this epistolographic *accessus* to St Augustine, can be encapsulated in the sentence which Petrarch gnomically states in his penultimate letter to Gherardo, that is, "Quamvis enim in literis non sit salus, *est* tamen *fuitque* iam multis ad salutem via."[965] The following is an analytical description of Petrarch's "pathway to salvation".

The *Familiaris* X 3 *Ad Gerardum, germanum suum monachum cartusiensem, de felicitate status illius et miseriis seculi cum exhortatione ad propositi perseverantiam.*

In the *Familiaris* IX 2, as we have already seen,[966] Petrarch tells Ludwig about friendship and brotherhood – *amicitia* and *germanitas* – the true aids or *presidia* of life. Some such people in Petrarch's life, however, only seemed to be friends and/or brothers, but really were not – "sed non erant".[967] It is here that Petrarch describes the kinds of death experienced by his two brothers. Petrarch,

[965] *Fam.*, XVII 1, 3.
[966] See pp. 201-202.
[967] *Fam.*, IX 2, 2.

however, does not stop here in his criticism of Gherardo. He continues by implicitly comparing him to Ludwig. Socrates, as we have already seen, has such a tameness of soul, a gift for conversation and a love for Petrarch that he seems to be more Italian than Belgian. His special blend of "gravitas morum" and "iocunditas", especially in the *ars musica*, had originally won him the nickname of 'Socrates'. Furthermore, Ludwig was the sole comfort and consolation in Petrarch's busy life, the only friend who could truly be his advisor, orator, confuter and judge. He was, furthermore, the only one with whom Petrarch wished he could share a life of study and meaningful conversation.[968] Socrates, already referred to in *Familiaris* VIII 7, 1 with "mi frater, mi frater, mi frater", is Petrarch's main interlocuter in the *Familiares*. That is, Socrates is the addressee of both the *Familiaris* I 1 and, although he was already dead, the *Familiaris* XXIV 13. In this light, as the alpha and omega of the *Rerum familarium libri*, Socrates, and not Gherardo, constitutes Petrarch's ideal of Ciceronian *amicitia* and *germanitas*.

The importance of these facts is emphasised by the presence of the syntagma "Vide siqua est via que sparsos recolligat amicos". This syntagma is very close to the famous syntagma in the explicit of the *Secretum*, "sparsa anime fragmenta recolligam". The programme concealed in the syntagma of the *Secretum* has been taken to allude to the *Canzoniere*.[969] Consequently, the syntagma in the *Familiaris* IX 2 must be of analogous importance. *Recolligere* in the Petrarchan sense must mean 'to bring one's significant others and the effusions of one's soul together in a bid to re-unite the divided self'. Completion, wholeness and closure of the circle are essential in the concomitant process of human and spiritual perfection.

The title of the very first letter to Gherardo continues the antithesis established in the preceding letter, X 2, concerning *felicitas* and Gherardo's position

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[968] *Fam.*, IX 2, 8-10.

regarding the world, that is, *felicitas* vs. *miseriae*. Whereas, in the *Familiaris* IX 2 to Socrates, Gherardo was considered almost as dead as Petrarch's other brother who had died at birth, Gherardo is now "luce carior".[970] The aim of the letter, probably written in 1347, is to put an end to the "longevum silentium"[971] which has been between them since Gherardo had entered Montrieux in 1342-3. We can infer from this that no correspondence in either direction has occurred between the two brothers in the five-year period. Petrarch allows himself to break the silence between them because in these five years of *tyrocinium*,[972] Gherardo is by now a "Christi miles". Indeed, he has been "probatus" by a "longa militia".[973] The way Petrarch chooses to introduce his "strepitum" into Gherardo's cloister is, however, the key to the correct exegesis of the letter. That is to say, Petrarch uses the verb, *compellare*.[974] Together with other terms throughout the letter, this one is taken from the technical language of law at the basis of their scholastic formation. The verb *compellare* (seen already in the Ventoux letter) is the intensive of *compello, compellis, compuli, compulsum, compellere* (to incite, compel, constrain to something). It is, therefore, the term used in tribunal courts meaning 'to call to answer', 'to accuse', 'to apostrophise', 'to call to account'. I have already mentioned that both Gherardo and Petrarch had studied the rudiments of law at university. Here, in fact, there are many explicit references to this legal terminology. These are "iniuriarum accusare", "quasi capitale crimen", "offensio",[975] "disceptare",[976] "rite"[977] and "de fori ac litium tempestate".[978] Whereas

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[969] Cf. Antonelli, 1992, pp.384-385.
[970] *Fam.*, X 3, 1.
[971] *Fam.*, X 3, 1.
[972] *Fam.*, X 3, 3.
[973] *Fam.*, X 3, 3, "Cristi iam miles es longa militia probatus".
[974] *Fam.*, X 3, 4, "deinceps securum te securus ipse compello".
[975] *Fam.*, X 3, 16.
[976] *Fam.*, X 3, 26.
[977] *Fam.*, X 3, 27.
[978] *Fam.*, X 3, 39.

the prior of Montrieux, who filtered all in-coming mail, might not have quite understood the exact meaning of this legal jargon, Petrarch could count on Gherardo's understanding it perfectly. The letter is far from the "exhortatio ad propositi perseverantiam", as the title says. It is, rather, as we shall se more clearly at the end of this chapter in the schematic description of the 'frescoes' comprising the *Familiaris* IV 1, a *compellatio*, that is, a reprimand and a reproachful call to account for his silence.

Petrarch opens the letter with an assertion which he will contradict several times. He claims that his not having written came from an "admiration for Gherardo's activities" (rerum tuarum admiratio).[979] These activities will also be called "occupationes optimae".[980] Though knowing he will only disturb Gherardo, Petrarch tells his brother that he is writing more for his own benefit than for Gherardo's. Compared to the "angelica colloquia" that Gherardo has everyday, Petrarch defines his own words as "sermunculi".[981] Seeing that Gherardo was able to despise "the blandishing world whilst in the flower of youth"[982] he was also able to safely pass by the Sirens and avoid shipwreck.

Both within this *compellatio* and in the light of the *Familiaris* IX 2, Petrarch uses a whole series of implicit comparisons. By reading the *Familiares* as a *liber*, it is immediately obvious that the first implicit comparison is between Socrates and Gherardo. If Ludwig is more "Italian" because of his "conversatio longior", then the "longevum silentium"[983] with which Petrarch's opens the first letter to Gherardo places the Carthusian monk in open contrast with the Belgian, making Gherardo 'less Italian'. Furthermore, were not the attributes concealed in the appellatives used

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[979] *Fam.*, X 3, 1.
[980] *Fam.*, X 3, 7.
[981] *Fam.*, X 3, 2.
[982] *Fam.*, X 3, 2, "qui mundum tum maxime blandientem medio etatis flore sic spernere potuisti."
[983] *Fam.*, X 3, 1.

for Ludwig, such as "gravitas", "iocunditas", advisor and orator, etc, the very opposite to those used by Petrarch to describe the friends he decides *not* to choose in his ascent of Mt Ventoux? Some friends, for example, were discarded exactly because of their "silentium".[984] At the time of this feigned climb, 1336, Ludwig Santo von Beringen had been Petrarch's close friend and companion at the Colonna court for some six years, that is, ever since the famous summer holiday spent together in Gascony in 1330.[985] Petrarch, however, chooses someone who was the opposite of Ludwig, Gherardo. Such a choice has been said to reflect Petrarch's understanding that "he has been searching outside for what was inside all along".[986] This choice, however, does not reflect the real situation in Petrarch's private life. It reflects the fact, rather, that Petrarch's literary reconstruction of the relationship with his brother was not based on historical reality. The choice of his brother rather than, let us say, Ludwig, must be interpreted, as I have already stated above,[987] as his desire *not* to follow the Augustine model of conversion.

The second instance of implicit comparison is concealed in Petrarch's apparent praise of Gherardo's ability to pass by the Sirens unscathed – "inter Sirenum voces obstructa tutus aure transire".[988] Gherardo avoided shipwreck due to the fact that his ears were full of wax. It is exactly here that Petrarch interrupts the natural development of the comparison. If Gherardo is "felix" and lucky, Petrarch, therefore, is "infelix" and unlucky; if Gherardo has wax in his ears, then Petrarch is the helmsman of the ship, and this is Ulysses.[989] Much later in the course of the

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[984] *Fam.*, IV 1, 4, "huius silentium, illius procacitas [...] terrebat".
[985] Cf. *Sen.*, I 3; III 1; Dotti, 1992, p.28.
[986] Robbins, 1985, p.538.
[987] See p. 265.
[988] *Fam.*, X 3, 2.
[989] Cf. *If.* 26, 112, where Dante's Ulysses calls his fellow sailors "frati". The term "frati" equates the relationship between Ulysses and his fellow sailors with the relationship between Petrarch (Ulysses) and his brother Gherardo (a sailor with wax in his ears). Indeed, the famous gnomic lines, "fatti non foste per viver come bruti/ ma per seguir virtute e canoscenza", in the light of Petrarch's stance concerning *Cartusia*, could well be referred to Gherardo. Let us remember that the term "frate" is used

letter, Petrarch will strengthen the allusion to Ulysses without any further explanation of the implicit comparison.[990] The underlying idea, however, is obvious: despite the wax in their ears when passing by the sirens, all of Ulysses' companions died before reaching the port in Ithaca. From this we can infer that Petrarch is alluding to his brother's conviction that monasticism is supposedly some safe port amidst the tempests of mortal life, in other words, that the Carthusians are safely living "in portu". The idea of the port or haven of monasticism is predominant in the coeval *De otio*, as we saw in the first chapter, and is linked to the nautical metaphor characterising much of the work. That is to say, Petrarch likens the monks to sailors who have safely reached the port, dry land or the lap of God in a new Jerusalem. By contrast, every other *modus vivendi* and city is Babylonian. Petrarch's implicit thesis, however, is quite the opposite. In line with Seneca, there is only one port or *hospitium*, and this, if you are Ulysses, is Ithaca, where you arrive only at the very end of your life. What might seem at a first reading to be praise of Gherardo's life choice, via the rhetorical device of implicit comparison, turns out to be, instead, open condemnation: Gherardo was destined to die a premature spiritual death because of the wax in his ears.

Another implicit comparison is to be found in the same context. As I stated above,[991] Petrarch draws upon the language of their common scholastic background to call the five-year period spent in Montrieux as Gherardo's "tyrocinium". Now Gherardo is supposedly "longa militia probatus".[992] The comparison will only be achieved when reading the next letter to Gherardo, the *Familiaris* X 4 in which Petrarch explains the title of the first *Bucolicum Carmen* as alluding to Virgil,

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45 times by Dante where, in 28 cases, it is used with the meaning of "brother" and or "companion". See Onder, 1971, p. 50. For the classical references concealed in this passage by Dante, see Brugnoli, 1998a, pp.38 & 57.

[990] *Fam.*, X 3, 21; 35.

[991] See p. 268, n. 972. See also below, p. 272, n. 994.

"quasi omni vita probatus".[993] Whereas Virgil had deserved to be called "probatus" (*dici meruit*) presumably because of his constant application to poetry as a bard on a sacred mission for the state and humanity, Gherardo is now a carefree monk in *Cartusia* thanks not to himself, but to the right hand of the Lord. Indeed, Petrarch strengthens the Augustinian dichotomy between Gherardo pre-conversion and Gherardo post-conversion by stating that Gherardo had been an "insignis transfuga", that is, a truly noteworthy deserter:

> Neque enim tyro ut olim, sed Cristi iam miles es longa militia probatus, gratias Illi qui tanto te honore dignatus est et ut sepe alias, ex agmine medio adversarum partium insignem transfugam ad sua signa convertit.[994]

In other words, it was almost despite Gherardo's sins that God chose to make him one of his 'busy' bees. In the comparison with Virgil via the term 'probatus', especially in the light of the above-mentioned allusion to Dante's possible intertext regarding the rivers of Virgilian eloquence compared to the rivers of Benedictine-style "sacra cenobia",[995] Gherardo can hardly be considered "omni vita probatus". He had, after all, decided to enter the cloister "whilst in the flower of youth", whereas Virgil had continued working on the *Aeneid* until his death.

Implicit comparison is also a technique used in the part of this letter which I would like to call "the meministi series". Petrarch invites Gherardo to remember (*meministi*...?) how and how often in a day they used to dress, how their shoes used to torture their feet, what pains they took to keep their clothes out of the way of any mud or horse-droppings being kicked up in the streets of Avignon or Bologna, how they took care that their clothes beautifully kept all their creases in the right places, how they would often scorch their foreheads when using the hot irons to style their

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[992] *Fam.*, X 3, 3.
[993] *Fam.*, X 4, 24.
[994] *Fam.*, X 3, 3.

fringes, how they preened themselves before going out, how they adored to be noticed and pointed out even by others whom they themselves despised.[996] The price of their *studium* and *labor* was to be noticed, just as Persius says: "to be pointed at with a finger, that's him".[997]

This was when Gherardo still had a "fleeting heart".[998] Indeed Gherardo was still such a "wavering, fleeting youth"[999] that he too would spend his time pining after a woman who refused to love him. Indeed, Gherardo had also, presumably, dedicated poems to her, as Petrarch's sonnet 91 *La bella donna che cotanto amavi* clearly suggests. Even here, in the *Familiaris* X 3, Petrarch explicitly mentions his past with Gherardo, during which both would compose poetry by "twisting syllables and shifting around words".[1000] Indeed, it was in composing poetry that their greatest efforts and longest pains were directed so that their "madness" might be known to the world and that they might both be spoken about by people far and wide.[1001] We can deduce from this that the "al popol tutto/ favola fui gran tempo" of the proemial sonnet to the *Canzoniere* also alludes to the same time spent with Gherardo. The two brothers would compose poetry to praise the women who occupied their hearts, where, compared now to the "davitica cantilena"[1002] which Gherardo is now accustomed to singing in Montrieux, their songs were "cantiuncule inanes falsis et obscenis muliercularum laudibus referte".[1003] This is why, in the same proemial

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995 See p. 224.
996 *Fam.*, X 3 11-13. cf. *De rem.* I, 2.
997 *Fam.*, X 3, 15; Pers., 1, 28, "At pulchrum est digito monstrari dicier: 'hic est!'".
998 *Fam.*, X 4, 21, "cor lubricum".
999 *Fam.*, XVI 9, 6, "adolescente vago et lubrico".
1000 *Fam.*, X 3, 21, "Quotiens sillabas contorsimus, quotiens verba transtulimus".
1001 *Fam.*, X 3, 21, "quanta nobis fuerat cura quanteque vigilie ut furor noster late notus et nos multorum essemus populorum fabula".
1002 *Fam.*, X 3, 27.
1003 *Fam.*, X 3, 25.

sonnet and elsewhere, Petrarch's hopes and pains are "vane" and why he writes, "onde sovente/ di me medesmo meco mi vergogno".[1004]

Gherardo has been freed from this raving state of shame and sin because, as we have already seen in the *commendatio* to Zanobi, that is, the *Familiaris* XVI 9, and in his epithet in this letter as "insignis transfuga",[1005] there has been the divine intervention of the Lord, that is, a "repentina mutatio dextere Excelsi".[1006] Petrarch, instead, was not chosen by the Lord. He was left, instead, and we might add, through no fault of his own, in the state of shame to rise through his own efforts. He writes:

> Ego sensim multisque laboribus assurgo, credo ut intelligi detur nullum hic adminiculum literarum, nullum opus ingenii, sed totum Dei munus esse, qui forte et michi manum porriget **imbecillitatem meam** ingenue confitenti.[1007]

The dichotomy established is clear. Gherardo has turned from singing about wanton women to singing Psalms "with all his soul to the heavens".[1008] On the other hand, Petrarch has been left to struggle up to God on his own. Indeed, Petrarch stresses the difference between himself and his brother in the quote above. Gherardo's state of bliss is a "Dei munus". Petrarch must fend for himself thanks to his "support of letters" (adminiculum literarum) and the "efforts of his own genius" (opus ingenii). Indeed, Petrarch strengthens this insistence upon the necessity to rely on his own prowess by completing the image created of his own *imbecillitas*. That is to say, if *imbecillitas* is to be taken as 'nullo baculo', that is, without a walking stick or prop, then the allusion is to the rod and staff of God. That is to say, Petrarch is alluding to *Psalm* 22 of David:

[1004] *RVF*, 1, 6 & 10-11.
[1005] *Fam.*, X 3, 3.
[1006] *Fam.*, X 3, 17.
[1007] *ibid.*
[1008] *Fam.*, X 3, 27, "Frater ergo rite cecinit erecto ad celum animo."

> Nam et si ambulavero in valle umbrae mortis,
> non timebo mala, quoniam tu mecum es.
> Virga tua et **baculus tuus**,
> ipsa me consolata sunt.[1009]

It is without such a staff that Petrarch creates the image of himself immediately afterwards in the letter in his "ego terrena cogitans et curvatus in terram; et forte liberatricem dexteram non agnovi, forte de propriis viribus speravi".[1010] Reminiscent also of *Psalmus penitentialis* VII 3, "Sperabam de viribus meis, et michi quedam magna promiseram", it would seem that Petrarch has excluded himself, or better, has been excluded, from the sudden *mutatio vitae* which only the right hand of the Lord could bring about. In other words, Petrarch has been left to continue singing songs of praise about wanton women. He has remained in a state of vanity.

It is precisely on the issue of vanity that Petrarch again uses the technique of implicit comparison. That is, he compares Gherardo and himself to Quintus Hortensius who, though a famous orator, was also accused of "feminea vanitas".[1011] Hortensius was "more delicate" than a man should ever be. He worried about his looks as much as he did about his eloquence. He never went out in public without having first consulted the mirror in front of which he adjusted his hair, his face and his toga and he admired himself. One day in a narrow lane a colleague bumped into him and ruined the pleats of his toga. Hortensius abused him for this offence as if it were a capital crime. This insistence upon dress, looks and having everything in order was what brought about his fame of "feminea vanitas".[1012] Petrarch does not

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[1009] *Ps.*, 22, 4.

[1010] *Fam.*, X 3, 27. For the possible intertextual allusions in Petrarch's "ego terrena cogitans et curvatus in terram" to Dante, Persius and, perhaps even Lactantius, see Brugnoli, 1998, p.67.

[1011] *Fam.*, X 3, 16.

[1012] *Fam.*, X 3, 16, "Quintus Hortensius orator fuit clarus, sed delicatior quam deceat virum, et forme non minus quam eloquentie studiosus, nunquam speculo inconsulto in publicum processit; in illo se comere, in illo se mirari, in illo vultum togamque componere consueverat. Multa sunt eius viri muliebria, sed illud in primis, collegam suum, quod is casu obvius arcto quodam loco in eum impegisset et artificiosum ex humero toge sinum turbasset collisione fortuita, iniuriarum accusare

continue, however, with the natural development of the comparison. He only reminds Gherardo that they were exactly the same as Hortensius: "Nos, frater, etsi nulli diem diximus ob eiusmodi iniuriam, animo tamen haud absimiles fuimus".[1013] What Petrarch leaves implicit is the fact that, although such excessive vanity was perhaps reprehensible, it was, nevertheless, the same orator who, in Cicero's no-longer extant treatise, *Hortensius*, prompted the young St Augustine towards philosophy, the first step towards Christian conversion. In other words, Hortensius was at the basis of St Augustine's introduction to philosophy and, therefore, to theology. The implicit comparison alludes to the idea that, even through vanity, that is, the pursuit of fame, glory and, as in the case of the two Petracchi brothers, notoriety through vernacular poetry, one may reach the theological heights of the greatest Father of the western church.[1014]

Indeed, it is about such a height that the passage in question conceals an implicit allusion to a mountain. The concealed allusion is achieved in a passage ostensibly directed to God and, therefore, not to Gherardo. The fact that in the following paragraph Petrarch writes, "Nunc ad te, frater, redeo" indeed gives the impression that Petrarch has embarked on a digression which, supposedly, has nothing directly to do with Gherardo.[1015] The effect of Petrarch's apostrophe to Christ must have had an enormous psychological effect on Gherardo and his reading public. Auerbach[1016] writes that the insertion of moving, even plainly false first-person orations in historical accounts was a technique used by Tacitus and many other Latin historiographers to obtain this very effect. Petrarch did not know Tacitus, but he certainly did know St Augustine's

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sustinuit prorsus feminea vanitate, quasi capitale crimen esset tam compositi habitus qualisqualis offensio."

[1013] *Fam.*, X 3, 17.

[1014] Cf. Dotti, 1992, pp. 37 & 396.

[1015] For digression as part of Petrarch's narrative technique, see Lokaj 2000.

[1016] Auerbach, 1956, p.46.

Confessions which open in exactly the same way.[1017] The 'speech' which Christ utters through Petrarch's pen, as it were, might, through St Augustine, be part of the same classical historicographical-rhetorical tradition.[1018] Indeed, it was by imitating Augustine that Petrarch began his 'speech' with God;

> O misericors Deus, quam tacite consulis, quam occulte subvenis, quam insensibiliter mederis! Quid enim tantis laboribus, bone Iesu, quid aliud nisi amorem mortalem imo vero mortiferum petebamus, cuius nos fallacem et multis sentibus obsitam suavitatem attingere summotenus permisisti, ne grande aliquid inexpertis videretur, et ne tanta esset ut opprimeret, misericorditer providisti, delitiis nostri e medio sublatis, cum quibus dextera tua spes nostras e terra pene radicitus extirpavit?[1019]

In this passage, Petrarch reminds Gherardo, through his direct confession to God, that they were both directed towards a "mortal, death-bearing love". Despite the fact that this love was potentially lethal for their souls, God allowed it. God even allowed them to reach its "fallacious sweetness covered over by thorn-bushes right up to its top". Petrarch's descent, therefore, is now inverted and is likened, instead, through the adverb *summotenus*, to a climb up to the summit of a mountain. The "multi sentes" might contain an eco of Dante's "Ytalie silva" described in the *De vulgari eloquentia* as containing "perplexi frutices atque sentes",[1020] however, I feel that the direct allusion is to Petrarch's own Mt Ventoux. We saw, in fact, in the first part of the present chapter how Petrarch was left to climb up to the top of Mt Ventoux on his own. I pointed out that, in a possible contamination with St Bonaventure's *Legenda Maior*, Petrarch's climb, much like the failed attempt fifty years beforehand of the "pastor vociferans", was carried out from the lower dales up

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[1017] *conf.*, 1, 1-6.
[1018] See also Constable, 1976, p.14.
[1019] *Fam.*, X 3, 23.
[1020] *VE.*, 1, 11, 1, "Quam multis varietatibus latio dissonante vulgari, decentiorem atque illustrem Ytalie venemur loquelam: et ut nostre venationi pervium callem habere possimus, perplexos frutices atque sentes prius eiciamus de silva"; and *ibid.*, 1, 18, 1.

through to the upper dales, passing through thorn groves. This was Petrarch's crucifixion and, therefore, his *imitatio Christi* in the name of vernacular poetry. Just as Christ was crowned with thorns, Petrarch would be crowned with laurel.

It is at this point that the letter becomes polemical. Petrarch uses the verb *disceptare*, which means 'to dispute', 'to debate', in order to understand why God had chosen to save Gherardo by taking him away from this climb. I believe that the entire stance adopted by Petrarch to present himself as the less fortunate of the two is purely rhetorical, because this is what he and contemporary society were expected to believe. Together with the reiterated insistence on Gherardo as supposedly "felicissimus", it was also a way of softening the *compellatio* itself with Gherardo so that it might be more effective. Analogously, when supposedly returning to speak more directly with Gherardo, "nunc ad te, frater, redeo", the "et sensim ad graviora conscendo" must now be interpreted as a blandishing *captatio benevolentiae*. The point of the letter is that, as we saw in the chapter on the *De otio*, it was considered madness, "amentia", to want to remain "ex portu". And yet, it was Petrarch who, along with the five Roman noble women going to Compostela, decides to remain 'out of his mind'. After all, both brothers, when they were still together, could walk between the snares of the climb/descent and sail between the rocks without encountering death.[1021] In the supposed digression and *disceptatio* with God, Petrarch is really accusing Gherardo of having abandoned the climb. This is why, in the Mt Ventoux letter, Gherardo scrambles up the straight path to the top leaving Petrarch to remain below. It is the *locus amoenus*, however, on the side of Mt Ventoux, where Petrarch undergoes his intellectual conversion (Illic a corporeis ad incorporea volucri cogitatione transiliens [...] ad beatam vitam).[1022] Gherardo is excluded from the benefit of such conversion because he was already at the top first

laughing and then sleeping.

That the whole letter should be read not as praise of Gherardo but, rather, as a denouncement, is also given by the same quote from the *Psalms* about walking in the middle of the shadow of death, which, perhaps, is the same as vainly entering into battle with vernacular poetry and wanton women. As we saw in the first chapter on the *De otio*, it was the very same *Psalm* 23 which authorised Petrarch's descent to Hades, which allegorically represents humanity's collective psyche and most cherished fallacies. We also saw in the first chapter that, seeing that Petrarch does descend into the shadow of death, in order not to remain trapped there, he knows that he only need call on Christ's help, as he points out also in his *Psalmi penitentiales*, when he writes: "eripe me de faucibus inferni!"[1023] and "Illic [*scil.* in celo] habitat redemptor meus, qui potens est ab infernis evellere".[1024] Indeed, following his known technique of implicit comparison, whereby he alludes to a literary locus without completing the comparison, much later in the context of the same letter to Gherardo, Petrarch uses *Psalm* 138, 8, via possible contamination with St Augustine's *Confessions* 1, 2, when he writes:

> Nam «et si ascendero in celum, illic est, et si descendero in infernum, adest». Omnia igitur coram Illo non quasi spectante sed **vere** spectante faciamus.[1025]

And as I pointed out in the first chapter on the *De otio*, the stress in Petrarch's aim lies in the adverb "vere", because, even at the bottom of Hades, which might also be called the Abyss, the Pit, or even the bottom of the cliff above the Sorgue, according to Petrarch, Christ *is* indeed watching and can intervene. The

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[1021] *Fam.*, X 3, 40, "Inter hos laqueos ambulavimus atque inter hos scopulos navigavimus, frater".
[1022] *Fam.*, IV 1, 12.
[1023] *Ps. pen.*, 1, 27.
[1024] *Ps. pen.*, 2, 3.
[1025] *Fam.*, X 3, 49. The variants of St Augustine are: *conf.*, 1, 2, "non enim ego iam in inferis, et tamen etiam ibi es. Nam etsi descendero in infernum, ades".

point is stressed further in the letter regarding the fact that inactivity or *otium* of the Carthusian type, can actually prevent Christ from saving us. Petrarch writes:

> Quodsi mortalis domini veneratio prestare potuit, quid Cristi presentia posse debet? Is equidem non expectandus ut veniat, sicut Cesarem suum infelix ille bellator expectat, sed suscipiendus colendusque; omnibus locis omnibusque temporibus presens est, videt actus nostros, cogitationes introspicit, ingens calcar animo nisi funeste consuetudinis torpor obsistat.[1026]

Christ, therefore, spurs us on in our search for Him, provided we do not fall into the confines of a deadly habit (*funesta consuetudo*). Analogously, as I have pointed out in the chapter on the *De otio*, Petrarch states that the Devil prefers people not to learn in order to seduce them more easily.[1027] It is for this reason that Gherardo and his fellow brethren are to be considered part of the "generatio mala".[1028]

The idea of descent, as opposed to Gherardo's life within the cloister, is also conveyed throughout the letter in the very language used. When God suddenly intervenes to save Gherardo from the clutches of Babylon, he "cleanses Gherardo's precipitous desire to satiate itself in fleeting things" (*satietate rerum pereuntium preceps illud desiderium castigabat*),[1029] where "preceps" obviously alludes to a fall, a cliff, in other words, the Pit. Analogously, when Petrarch reminds Gherardo about what they both have been through, he alludes to their stormy legal battles, the dangers of imprisonment and ambush. Petrarch then writes that "the memory of these things renews his disbelief and horror" (quorum commemoratio stuporem michi renovat et horrorem), where "stupor" and "horror" constitute a hendiadys indicating 'petrifying horror'.[1030] The probable intertexts which Petrarch has sewn into the letter are Dante's "che nel **pensier rinova** la **paura**!" of *Inferno* I 6, the

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[1026] *Fam.*, X 3, 47.
[1027] See nn. 166-167.
[1028] *De otio*, p.684 & n. 165.
[1029] *Fam.*, X 3, 22.

"Tu vuoi ch'io **rinovelli** disperato **dolor**" of *Inferno* XXXIII 5-6, and the root of these two, that is, Virgil's "Infandum, regina, iubes **renovare dolorem**" with the following "quamquam animus **meminisse horret** luctuque refugit"[1031] As Dante was about to descend to Hell, so too was Petrarch. As Aeneas was about to tell Dido about the horrors of his flight from Troy, Petrarch has also been reminding Gherardo (and his reading public) about his (and their) past brushes with spiritual death.

As we saw above regarding the true value of "probatus",[1032] Gherardo's new role as *miles Christi* should also be re-addressed. As we are about to see, it is here that the *compellatio* truly lies. Even though Gherardo has just been described as "longa militia probatus", Petrarch contaminates the military metaphor with the more usual nautical metaphor, probably because of the allusion to Ulysses and the Sirens. Petrarch writes that "Every *strepitus* frightens the inexperienced *miles* out of his wits."[1033] The frightened soldier must be Gherardo, and not some generic *miles*, inasmuch as Gherardo had fled the noise of the world in order to seek out Carthusian silence, and now Petrarch is introducing again the same noise of the world into Gherardo's cloister. Petrarch continues saying that "those who have been tempered by constant battles are not shaken by anything."[1034] This must be an allusion to Petrarch himself who, as we saw in the first chapter on the *De otio*, was left to fight alone beneath the mighty walls of monasticism. Indeed, here in the *Familiaris* X 3, while Gherardo thinks that he is safely in his monastic haven or port, Petrarch is still subject to death, worries, illness, old-age, fear, hunger, poverty, hell, fatigue, Cerberus and whatever else the genius of poets has thought up

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[1030] *Fam.*, X 3, 39.
[1031] *Aen.*, 2, 3 & 12.
[1032] See p. 268, n. 973; p. 272, n. 992.
[1033] *Fam.*, X 3, 4, "militem inexpertum strepitus omnis exanimat".
[1034] *Fam.*, X 3, 4, "duratus bellis nullo fragore concutitur".

to terrify the hearts of men.[1035] Later in the same letter, Petrarch will use the same language he had used in the *De otio*, that is, he states that the real *miles probatus* lives amid swords, arrows and great danger.[1036] They suffer thirst, dust, heat and snake bite, all without complaining.[1037]

It is in this light that we should interpret the locus of the inexperienced sailor. Analogously, "the inexperienced sailor (rudis nauta) is terrified by the slightest murmur of wind, while the experienced helmsman (gubernator antiquus) who has brought his worn out and unrigged ship many times into the port, looks down on the angered sea from on high."[1038] The helmsman who "despicit ex alto" on the storm is iconographically Jove as he is described in *Aen.* 1, 223-224, "aethere summo despiciens mare". The same image is evoked, as we saw in the chapter on the *De otio*, in *RVF* 235, 5-6 in the line "né mai saggio nocchier guardò da scoglio/ nave". Here, on line 14, the ship is "disarmata di vele et di governo", like the ships lost by Aeneas ("disarmato legno" is the metaphor of Petrarch's ship in *RVF* 292, 11). It is because of the catalogue of factors against which Petrarch has constantly fought over the years, during which Gherardo was safely in the port of monasticism, that it is possible to glean from the rhetorical structure of the letter that the "gubernator antiquus" is Petrarch himself, or better, that other side of him, Amor, which he allows to guide the ship of his erring in the sonnet 189, "et al governo/ siede 'l signore, anzi 'l nimico mio."[1039] The concept of wanting to constantly engage in battle was already seen in the first chapter on the *De otio* regarding both the phrase "Nam virtus in infirmitate perficitur" and the entire discussion of the fact

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[1035] *Fam.*, X 3, 5, "quod nulla te amplius rerum facies movebit, non luctus non cure non morbi non senectus non metus non fames non egestas, terribiles visu forme, lethumque laborque, postremo non ingens ianitor Orci ossa super recubans antro semesa cruento, et quicquid aliud ad exterrendum corda mortalium poetarum ingeniis cogitatum est".
[1036] *Fam.*, X 3, 45.
[1037] *Fam.*, X 3, 46.
[1038] *Fam.*, X 3, 4, "rudis nauta primo ventorum murmure terretur, gubernator antiquus qui totiens fatiscentem et exarmatam puppim perduxit in portum, ex alto despicit iratum mare".

that Rome remained virtuous for as long as its enemy, Carthage, was left standing. In this letter it is explicit in the denouncement of inactivity due to "funesta consuetudo".[1040]

After all, were Gherardo's "occupationes optime" really capable of training him for Christ's militia? God brought Gherardo out from his mother's womb and destined him to "hoc laboriosum certe sed gloriosum iter".[1041] Gherardo's "varie difficultates"[1042] are even supposedly greater than the twelve Herculean feats. We saw, however, in the letters analysed above that such "excellent activities" are cooking, eating, gardening, sleeping, praying and singing David's psalms up to heaven.[1043] Here they are "dulce otium", "silentium", "solitudo", "silve", "ieiunia", "nocturni chori", "celestis pax", "amicitia Dei" and "sempiterna vita".[1044] How is it, we may wonder, that Gherardo's "occupationes optime" have trained him to be even more "probatus" than Petrarch in confronting death, worries, illness, etc, and more persevering (*constans*) than Hercules in tackling all the frightful tasks imposed on him by Jove, his adulterous father?[1045] It is probable that "optime" should now be interpreted in the opposite sense, that is, in a similar way to the numerous cases of negative hyperboles which I have analysed elsewhere.[1046] It is probable, therefore, that the "occupationes optime" constitute the "funesta consuetudo" which will prevent Gherardo benefiting from a true communion with Christ. Moreover, in the *De otio* Petrarch pointed out very clearly to Gherardo and his fellow brethren that raising one's voice to God to sing psalms was not enough,

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[1039] *RVF*, 189, 3-4.
[1040] *Fam.*, X 3, 47.
[1041] *Fam.*, X 3, 5.
[1042] *ibid.*
[1043] See pp. 252-253.
[1044] *Fam.*, X 3, 42.
[1045] *Fam.*, X 3, 6, "Neque plus constantie tribuerit adversus omne terrificum Herculi suo Iupiter adulterio pater".
[1046] Lokaj 2000.

as, through intellectual inactivity, the devil could more easily hinder one's pathway back to Christ.[1047]

This is particularly so in the light of the fact that it is here that the *compellatio* specifically calls Gherardo to answer. That is, Petrarch invites Gherardo to find some free time among his "occupationes optimae" in order to send something back to Petrarch, even something short. This is the first explicit invitation for Gherardo to apply his knowledge and actually write something. Even though Petrarch will refer to lay writers, Gherardo should not disdain them inasmuch as they were quoted without hesitation by Saints Ambrose, Augustine and Jerome, and even by St Paul. These classical writers are worthy, therefore, of Petrarch's tongue and not unworthy, consequently, of Gherardo's ears. Gherardo should not keep his cell door shut on these writers of antiquity.

The reference to Gherardo's ears refers back to the *Familiaris* IV 1 when Petrarch first opens St Augustine. Gherardo's *modus legendi* consisted in his listening to what Petrarch had to say: "Frater expectans per os meum ab Augustino aliquid audire, intentis auribus stabat".[1048] That is, Gherardo, like so many others in the Middle Ages, only read (*legere*) inasmuch as he could listen (*audire*).[1049] Reading was a question of being filtered information without any exegetical effort on the part of the individual. The *compellatio* was meant to stir Gherardo to active reading.

The allusion to classical writers worthy of Christian contemplation is developed immediately afterwards. Petrarch briefly speaks of the conceptual traps into which great classical writers of the past fell. Petrarch welcomes the anathema

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[1047] *De otio*, p.670.
[1048] *Fam.*, IV 1, 27.
[1049] *Legere* and *audire* were more or less synonyms in the Middle Ages, when most reading was out loud and when "the masses of the people read by means of the ear rather than the eye, by hearing others read or recite rather than by reading to themselves." Cf. Crosby, 1936, p.88 cit. in Constable,

of both the concept of metempsychosis and those who embraced it, such as Pythagoras, Plato and Aristotle. These philosophers were, after all, pagan and might be excused. What Petrarch found unacceptable was that someone as great as Origen should believe in metempsychosis. Because of this, Petrarch agrees with Jerome that Origen, though admired at first by followers of the Catholic faith, was, in the end, justly excommunicated.

The narratological necessity of such a digression on metempsychosis would seem to be dictated not only by an attempt to begin talking about difficult philosophical concepts with Gherardo, but also to point out to him that the issue of correct faith is not always so clear-cut. For faith to be orthodox in the Catholic sense there must be discussion, exchange and critical analysis. In such a critical milieu, it is possible to talk about the genius of Lucretius and the errors of Origen. On the other hand, blind acceptance of dogma, or supinely waiting for others to tell you what to believe is not, for Petrarch, the "via ad salutem".[1050]

In this light was can also explain a seeming intratextual contradiction. We saw in the letters analysed above about Gherardo, especially in the letter immediately preceding this one, the *Familiaris* X 2,[1051] that it was Gherardo who, from the port of monasticism, looked down on humanity from on high: "despiciat ab alto".[1052] Now it would seem that it is Petrarch who "ex alto despicit".[1053] The contradiction in terms could well be explained by the fact that Gherardo's *despicere* is indifference towards the plight of humanity, whereas Petrarch's *despicere* is due to the fact that, on the one hand, Christ is there watching, ready to intervene in case

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1976, p.54.
[1050] *Fam.*, XVII 1, 3.
[1051] See p. 211, n. 776.
[1052] *Fam.*, X 2, 6.
[1053] *Fam.*, X 3, 4.

of extreme difficulty, and, on the other, Petrarch has been tempered by these same difficulties and is thus more able to sail by them safely.

Concerning the above-mentioned allusion to Pythagoras,[1054] Petrarch completes the *compellatio* to Gherardo by telling him that Pythagoras, whose house was considered a temple, and who, after his death, was thought to dwell among the gods, had taught that his disciples should not speak for five years. It would be absurd to want to say something before one had learnt what to say. Petrarch poignantly reminds his brother that he had keep silent for seven years in the school of Christ and that it was high time he started saying something. If Gherardo considered his own silence above everything else, then he could at least answer his brother silently, that is, by writing.[1055] This is where the 'meministi series' begins. In other words, *Cartusia* has put a *repagulum* or bolt on Gherardo's mouth which is the same as the bolt on his cell door. The *compellatio* wants to induce Gherardo to take off the gag and open himself up to Petrarch the humanist in order to use the support of letters (*adminiculum literarum*) with his own "opus ingenii".[1056]

It is exactly in this light that the *compellatio* continues. Here, however, Petrarch inverts the daring rhetorical means he used earlier in the letter. That is, whereas before Petrarch 'digressed' in order to polemically address Christ in the *disceptatio*, here Petrarch feigns that Christ is somehow talking. I believe that Petrarch's authorisation for such a daring, and possibly even blasphemous, usage of the *Verbum Dei*, derives from St Augustine. Whereas in the *disceptatio* Petrarch

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[1054] See p. 285.

[1055] *Fam.*, X 3, 9, "Verum, ne Pithagore occursus me deviare coegerit, vir ille cuiusque ingenii, morum illa etate gravissimorum fuit clarissimeque modestie; unde et viventi summus honor impensus et ipse post mortem deorum concilio ascriptus est; domus eius apud posteros pro templo habita. Huius ergo prima institutio quenam fuit? Nempe ut discipuli sui quinquennio silerent. Preclare. Stultum est enim prius loqui velle quam discas. Ceterum ad amovendum ori, non dico custodiam, que amovenda nunquam est, sed repagulum, quinque tempus annorum sufficiens extimavit; tu vero, si rite computo, in servitio Iesu Cristi et in scola eius iam septimum annum siles. Tempus est ut loqui posse aliquid incipias, vel si pre omnibus silentium dulce est, michi vel in silentio respondeas".

[1056] Cf. *Fam.*, X 3, 17.

contaminated *Psalm* 23 with St Augustine's *Confessions* 1, 1-6, now he uses an *amplificatio* of a particular part of the Augustinian text, *Confessions* 1,5, to introduce the voice of God. Where St Augustine had limited himself, in his discussion with the Lord, to writing, "Dic animae meae: salus tua ego sum", which is effectively a quote from *Psalm* 35(34), 3, Petrarch develops an entire paragraph. It is now Christ *compellans* who, through Petrarch as His self-appointed divine scribe, is supposed to urge Gherardo to spring to intellectual action. In the use of the verb "clamare", Christ is imagined to be 'calling out' to Gherardo. The image created is probably meant to recall both the "vox clamantis in deserto" in John 1,23 and the *compellatio* itself as a 'calling to answer'.

The voice of the Lord develops his discourse, as Petrarch has been doing since the beginning of the letter, on the idea of descent: "ego pro vobis mortem sponte sustinui",[1057] "inter vos ex alto sub servili habitu dissimulata maiestate descendens, pro salute vestra paupertatem labores insidias convitia contumelias carcerem verbera flagella mortem crucemque non timui."[1058] The thrust of Christ's (and, therefore, Petrarch's) polemic is that humanity (and, therefore, Gherardo) is ungrateful. The adjective *ingrati* appears, in fact, both at the beginning and at the end of Christ's speech.[1059] In other words, a title for Christ's speech could be, *De humanitatis ingratitudine*. Humanity's (and, therefore, Gherardo's) lack of gratitude consists in the fact that the creator of the cosmos, who governs the seasons, the zodiac and the winds, who sends forth the fruits of the fields together with every possible joy and variety for humanity, who even made man in His own likeness, who even descended into the flesh and died for humanity, is denied a "labor

[1057] *Fam.*, X 3, 50.
[1058] *Fam.*, X 3, 52.
[1059] *Fam.*, X 3, 50 & 52.

exiguus".[1060] At this point, it is impossible not to see in Christ's interrogative, "Quid agitis, ceci et ingrati?"[1061] an allusion to the semantic and protreptic significance in the *De otio* of both the invitation "Vacate et videte" and the phrase describing the current state of affairs in *Cartusia*, that is, "otium agitis". It is also impossible not to see that the "labor exiguus", which Christ (alias Petrarch) would like from blind and ungrateful humanity (that is, from blind and ungrateful Gherardo), is the same as the request Petrarch had made earlier in the letter for Gherardo to "respondere breve aliquid".[1062] The kind of brother (or humanity) Petrarch is up against is one who is deaf, blind and dumb to the entreaties of the Lord.

The Lord, and, therefore, Petrarch, is almost sarcastically angry at this blind, ungrateful humanity. God cries out his anger by stressing the unfathomable difference between man and Him. Humankind was created "ex nichilo" and yet dared rebel against Him and deviate from the pathway along which He wanted to be sought out. In the very strong "ipse ego"[1063] and in the opposition between "servilis habitus" and "dissimulata maiestas",[1064] God is almost offended that He should have had to descend in order to save such ingrates who are not even capable (nec cogitare sufficitis)[1065] of grasping the wonders which He has so generously given them. It is at this point that Petrarch reverts back to his own voice and, as we have seen elsewhere, begins a new paragraph and returns to his brother as if the preceding paragraph had been a simple digression. The fact is, however, that Petrarch continues with the sarcasm which characterised Christ's speech. He opens the next paragraph with, "Sed quia diu iam te, frater, ab altitudine contemplationum tuarum

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[1060] *Fam.*, X 3, 50.
[1061] *ibid.*
[1062] *Fam.*, X 3, 7.
[1063] *Fam.*, X 3, 52.
[1064] *ibid.*
[1065] *ibid.*

distraxisse vereor".[1066] The "ab altitudine contemplationum tuarum" immediately recalls two elements: on the one hand, Gherardo's "occupationes optime", which, as we have seen, are not "optime" at all, and, on the other hand, Christ's descent "ex alto".[1067] For someone who had been created *ex nichilo* and was so ungrateful, according to Petrarch, as to deny his Maker the smallest of gifts, the "ab altitudine" would definitely seem to be a hyperbole to be understood in the opposite sense.

In the last paragraph Petrarch explains to Gherardo the aims of the *compellatio*. The protasis, "si vis nullo labore nullis omnino vigiliis fatigari"[1068] strongly comforts my hypothesis that the "labor exiguus", which humanity denies Christ, is really the "breve aliquid" denied to Petrarch and Christ by Gherardo. The hypothesis is also comforted by the fact that Petrarch beseeches Gherardo "to place his rebellious body in chains",[1069] which, especially with the verb *negare* of "vos michi laborem exiguum negatis"[1070] and the adverb *serviliter* reminiscent of "sub servili habitu",[1071] immediately refers back to the "rebellantes ac devii" who were ungrateful to God's for his numerous "beneficia".[1072] Seeing that the sarcasm contained in Petrarch's "ab altitudine contemplationum tuarum" probably conceals an allusion to Gherardo's unexercised intellectual abilities, that is, to his lack of acumen through inactivity and, therefore, to an incorrect understanding of Christ's speech, Petrarch offers a summary: "hec summa est".[1073] In this summary, however, Petrarch then introduces a series of imperatives whose aim is to urge Gherardo to start reading. First of all, Gherardo should "turn to Christ".[1074] He should then

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[1066] *Fam.*, X 3, 54.
[1067] *Fam.*, X 3, 52.
[1068] *Fam.*, X 3, 54.
[1069] *Fam.*, X 3, 57, "Corpori tuo, tanquam **rebellaturo** si possit et contumaci mancipio, nichil tribuas nisi quod **negare** non potes; in vinculis habe; **serviliter** tractari debet ut intelligat unde sit".
[1070] *Fam.*, X 3, 50.
[1071] *Fam.*, X 3, 52.
[1072] *ibid.*
[1073] *Fam.*, X 3, 54.
[1074] *Fam.*, X 3, 54, "Illum igitur intuere".

"choose some guides for his profession of faith".[1075] If he finds John the Baptist, Anthony of the Desert and Macharius too rigid, then he should "choose Augustine and Arsenius whom he has always appreciated".[1076] The library of Montrieux may be poor, but nevertheless, Gherardo has access to the *Patrum vitae*, that is, the lives of the desert Fathers (such as the already-mentioned Anthony the Abbot and his first follower Macharius). He should "thoroughly examine them".[1077] Seeing that Petrarch then adds "ibi amicum invenies", which is similar to the "tu in eis solamen ac refrigerium non mediocre reperies" immediately below,[1078] the addition "ut facis" after the imperative "perlege" should not be taken at face value. If Gherardo has at all read the lives of the desert Fathers, then he has obviously not done it properly. Even though Montrieux probably does not possess a copy of St Gregory's *Dialogues* or of Augustine's *Soliloquies*, Petrarch invites Gherardo to read them. The "non dubito" of the next sentence probably alludes to the fact that Petrarch knows or suspects that Montrieux does not in fact hold these books. Indeed, Petrarch invites his brother to read Augustine's *Confessions* which, as we shall see in the very last letter sent to Gherardo, the *Familiaris* XVIII 5, Petrarch will have to send to him. The next imperative, "partire",[1079] regards how Gherardo should divide up his life. It is a real instance of an outsider interfering with the politics of the cloister. Gherardo should "divide up his whole life between contemplation, psalm-singing, praying and reading".[1080] The first three of this catalogue of activities already constitute Gherardo's "occupationes optime". The element which Petrarch had introduced with emphasis in the last position, the element which, presumably, also introduces the "strepitum" into Gherardo's life, is "lectio". The term *lectio*

[1075] *Fam.*, X 3, 55, "elige tibi aliquos de professionis tue ducibus".
[1076] *Fam.*, X 3, 55.
[1077] *Fam.*, X 3, 55, "illas perlege".
[1078] *Fam.*, X 3, 56.
[1079] *Fam.*, X 3, 57.

obviously refers to reading the Breviary, but I believe that it also alludes to reading *tout court*. This is something which, obviously, Gherardo does not do.

In conclusion, Petrarch has started his indoctrination of Gherardo in a bid to lead him to a direct reading of St Augustine's *Confessions* which he cannot as yet read because he does not even have any access to it, both physically and intellectually. An integral part of Petrarch's teaching method, as we discussed in the chapter on the *De otio religioso*, is to use a style far from his usual one. He calls this "an almost monastic style" seeing that he is thinking more about his brother than about himself.[1081] Indeed, about the *Psalms*, Petrarch also states that he had written a poem (the *Psalmi penitentiales*?) in his own style: "more meo".[1082] In other words, Petrarch has modified his language so as to be more readily understood by the public for whom he was writing. This explains the diffuse use of the *Psalms* and St Augustine, with a relatively limited, un-Petrarchan use of classical authors.

The last intertextual allusion is perhaps the following. God endowed Gherardo with the "wings of a dove so that he may fly and rest".[1083] The problem for Petrarch is, however, that Gherardo has chosen to rest all too quickly (non segniter) so as not to hear the "innumerabilia mundi mala".[1084] If the intertextual allusion is to the *Familiaris* IV 1, where Petrarch in the *locus amoenus* on the side of Mt Ventoux "rises with winged thought from earthly things to extra-earthly things",[1085] then the *Familiaris* X 3 really does become a protreptic invitation to Gherardo to use those same wings again and fly closer, through "adminiculum literarum" and "opus ingenii", and not only through the cloister, to the metaphysical world of the Son.

[1080] *Fam.*, X 3, 57, "inter contemplationem ac psalmodiam et orationem lectionemque partire".
[1081] *Fam.*, X 3, 59, "non meo sed peregrino stilo ac prope monastico dictavi, te potius quam me ipsum cogitans."
[1082] *Fam.*, X 3, 56.
[1083] *Fam.*, X 3, 58, "ac gratias agens quod tibi pennas dedit [*scil.* Dominus] tanquam columbe ut volares et requiesceres".
[1084] *Fam.*, X 3, 58.
[1085] *Fam.*, IV 1, 12, "Illic a corporeis ad incorporea volucri cogitatione transiliens".

Indeed, it is in this light that we may accept that Sonnet 99 may very well have been written for Gherardo.[1086] In the *ordo* of the *RVF* it is close, after all, to Sonnet 91 "La bella donna che cotanto amavi" specifically written to console Gherardo after the death of his beloved. Sonnet 99 was possibly written after Gherardo's entry into Montrieux. Its last tercet plays on the polysemy, to which I alluded in the introduction, of the term *frater*. It reads:

> Frate, tu vai/
> mostrando altrui la via, dove sovente/
> fosti smarrito, et or se' più che mai.

The *Familiaris* X 4 *Ad eundem, de stilo patrum et de proportione inter theologiam et poetriam, cum expositione brevi prime egloge bucolici sui carminis ad eum misse*. (2 Dec. 1348-9):

The following letter, the *Familiaris* X 4, is, as the title suggests, about the Church Fathers, the relationship between theology and poetics, and the first eclogue from Petrarch's own *Bucolicum Carmen*. In Gherardo's indoctrination, the epistolographical lesson, that is, the *accessus ad auctorem* through Petrarch's *Familiares*, becomes more difficult.

In attaching his first eclogue to the letter, Petrarch knows that Gherardo will find it "contrary to his profession of faith" (dissonum professioni tue adversumque proposito). This is, apparently, in open contrast with Petrarch's invitation for Gherardo to find guides for his "professio" in the preceding letter.[1087] As we shall see in the course of the letter, however, this fact will be the first step towards to an understanding on Gherardo's part of the exquisitely Petrarchan *reductio ad unum* of the sacred and the profane in a united bid to find Christ immanent in everything. For the moment, Gherardo is asked not to make rash judgements on what he, as yet,

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[1086] See Santagata, 1996, p.468.

does not understand. Just as Petrarch had pointed out in the preceding letter, that is, that Pythagoras's first tenet was to keep silent for five years, for it would be "stultum [...] prius loqui velle quam discas",[1088] analogously, here it would be "stultum iudicare de incognitis".[1089] And the overall message is introduced straight away, "theologie quidem minime adversa poetica est. Miraris?", which will introduce Gherardo to the ultimate development of the same thought contained in the *Familiaris* XVII 1, which I mentioned above, that is, "Quamvis enim in literis non sit salus, *est* tamen *fuitque* iam multis ad salutem via".[1090]

The first paragraph demonstrates to Gherardo that poetry is not deleterious for the soul. Even theology can be poetic and even allegorical, whereby Christ can be a lion, a lamb or even a worm.[1091] Petrarch reminds his brother that Aristotle states that the first theologians were poets.[1092] Indeed, the need to investigate divinity and to know the truth is naturally in man.[1093] After all, Petrarch continues, the way of elevating language from its plebeian and course style by modulating it with music (*numeri*) was called "poetes". Hence, the first priests were called "poetae".[1094] Boccaccio actually confirms that Petrarch sent this letter to Gherardo and uses it in his *Esposizioni sopra la Comedia di Dante*.[1095] Petrarch continues in the letter saying that "Even the patriarchs of the Old Testament and the saints of the New

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[1087] *Fam.*, X 3, 55, "elige tibi aliquos de professionis tue ducibus".
[1088] *Fam.*, X 3, 10.
[1089] *Fam.*, X 4, 1.
[1090] *Fam.*, XVII 1, 3. See p. 266, n. 965.
[1091] *Fam.*, X 4, 1, "parum abest quin dicam theologiam poeticam esse de Deo: Cristum modo leonem modo agnum modo vermem dici, quid nisi poeticum est?".
[1092] *Fam.*, X 4, 2, "unde et apud Aristotilem primos theologizantes poetas legimus".
[1093] *Fam.*, X 3, 3, "noscendi veri precipueque vestigande divinitatis studio – quod naturaliter inest homini".
[1094] *Fam.*, X 4, 4, The phrase is literally from Isidore of Siville, *orig.*, 8, 7, 2: "id genus, quia forma quadam efficitur, quae π ο ι ο τ η ς dicitur, poema vocitatum est, eiusque fictores poetae".
[1095] Boccaccio *Esposizioni*, *ad Inf.* I Esp. litt. 73-75, "cioè donde avesse origine il nome del poeta. Ad evidenzia della qual cosa è da sapere, secondo che il mio padre e maestro messer Francesco Petrarca scrive a Gherardo, suo fratello, monaco di Certosa, gli antichi Greci, poi che per l'ordinato movimento del cielo e mutamento appo noi de' tempi dell'anno e per altri assai evidenti argomenti, ebbero compreso uno dovere essere colui il quale con perpetua ragione dà ordine a queste cose, e quello essere Idio, e tra loro gli ebbero edificati templi e ordinati sacerdoti e sacrifici, etc".

Testament, together with the Fathers of the Church, all composed poems. They are, therefore, poets. Even David, whose poems (the *Psalms*) Gherardo sings day and night, deserves to be called the "Cristianorum poeta".[1096] Only the "demens" or "ypocrita" accepts food served on a terracotta plate but refuses it when served on a gold plate.[1097]

The second paragraph reveals a fact that I have not found mentioned anywhere else in Petrarch's works or in the critical literature. Petrarch writes,

> Tertia retro estas me tunc in Galliis agentem ad fontem Sorgie compulerat, quam sedem vite nostre quondam delegimus, ut nosti; sed tibi divino munere sedes tutior tranquilliorque parabatur; michi ne illa quidem uti licuit, raptante me altius fortuna quam sat est.[1098]

Even though the use of the plural is part of Petrarch's normal *modus scribendi* when writing about himself, as was the case for Cicero and most other classical writers, it does not seem to be the case when Petrarch writes to his brother. The "sed" in conjunction with the two datives, "tibi" and "michi", in fact, specifies the subject of "nostre" and "delegimus". It would seem, therefore, that sometime before Gherardo's 'abduction' into *Cartusia*, the two brothers had chosen to dwell *together* in Vaucluse. The fact that, to my knowledge, Petrarch makes no mention of this episode anywhere else in his works might mean that Petrarch at some point chose to eradicate it as if it had never existed. Indeed, the "ut nosti" introduces an echo of regret and perhaps anger as if Petrarch felt betrayed or abandoned by Gherardo. It may not be a coincidence that the following letter, the *Familiaris* X 5, that is, the letter which will close this first group of epistolographical lessons to Gherardo, bears an eschatocollon which is a genuine hapax in the entire *Rerum familiarium libri*, that is, "III Idus Iunias, *in solitudine*." The dichotomy established between the

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[1096] *Fam.*, X 4, 6.
[1097] *Fam.*, X 4, 9.

two brothers is thus poignantly strengthened: Gherardo is in Montrieux because of the "divinum munus" mentioned here and previously; Petrarch lives on the banks of the Sorgue and is forced to carry on forging a humanistic poetics on his own.

The same paragraph also strengthens the *medietas* already seen in the *Familiares* XVI 8 and XVI 9 analysed above, in which such *medietas* conceptually describes the halfway point between Avignon and Rome, Provence and Italy, Scylla and Charybdis. Vaucluse was supposed to be the "media via" for both of them, the only place where they might reach the top of Mt Ventoux together and equally benefit from the teachings of St Augustine. Gherardo has abandoned this *medietas*, but this does not seem to indicate, as most modern critics believe, that Gherardo in Montrieux now represents the *via contemplativa* and Petrarch in Vaucluse the *via activa*. In Vaucluse Petrarch, as *monachos*, can cultivate both the *via activa* and *contemplativa*; in Montrieux, Gherardo only cultivates his "occupationes optime", that is, inactive *otium*.

To further strengthen the dichotomy, Petrarch tells Gherardo about his *Bucolicum Carmen*. It is now that Gherardo should begin to understand what Petrarch had asked him at the beginning of the letter not to judge harshly before understanding it. Petrarch effectively establishes an equation between Gherardo's psalm singing in Montrieux and Petrarch's own 'singing' in poetry. That Petrarch's composing poetry is proposed as an equivalent to Gherardo's singing of praise to the Lord is given in two different ways. First of all, Petrarch explicitly uses the verb *canere* when he is inspired by the environment and the recesses of the woods to 'sing' something "silvestre". He writes;

> Ipse autem loci habitus et recessus nemorum, quo me sepe curis gravidum lux oriens urgebat et unde me sola nox rediens pellebat, ut silvestre aliquid **canerem** suasere.[1099]

[1098] *Fam.*, X 4, 10.
[1099] *Fam.*, X 4, 11.

Petrarch then introduces the two shepherds of the first eclogue as "pastores canentes"[1100] where derivatives of the verb *canere* are distributed throughout the entire text.[1101] This 'singing' is also semantically equivalent to 'praising', as in Gherardo's praising of the Lord, as is given in the expression, "iam canere didicisse, ita ut laudetur ab aliis",[1102] and "Quod audiens Silvius, mox hominem recognoscit et vocem modumque canendi deprimit attollens suos; ex adverso Monicus suum meritis laudibus accumulat".[1103] Just as *cantilena* derives from *canere*, so too, supposedly, does the term *carmen*.

Petrarch's 'singing' is also equivalent to the *horae canonicae* in which Gherardo sings praises to the Lord. It is in these same *horae* that Petrarch composes. As we saw above in the quote, the "loci habitus" and the "recessus nemorum" urge Petrarch to sing something "silvestre" at the light of dawn, "lux oriens", and at dusk, "nox rediens". The moments of composition would seem to correspond to the canonical singing of praise *ad Matutinum* (as in the "Dum antilucanas Cristo laudes canunt" of *Familiaris* XVI 9,15) and *ad Vesperas* here. Indeed, if we refer back to the last letter, the *Familiaris* X 3, we notice that Petrarch has paraphrased the Psalter of the Franciscan Breviary. That is,

Franciscan Psalter: **Nocte surgentes** vigilemus omnes,/ Semper in psalmis meditemur, atque/ Voce concordi **Domino canamus** Dulciter **hymnos**.[1104]

Petrarch:**surgemus nocte** alacres – hoc enim agere ceperam – ut eo tempore devotius **Cristo laudes canamus**[1105]

We gather from this that Petrarch had already introduced the concept according to which his *Bucolicum Carmen* was conceived as his *laus* or praise to Christ. It would

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[1100] *Fam.*, X 4, 15.
[1101] *Fam.*, X 4, 16, "cantum"; 18 "cantorem; canendi; canat"; 19 "cantilene".
[1102] *Fam.*, X 4, 15.
[1103] *Fam.*, X 4, 18.
[1104] In the modern Roman Breviary, the Psalm is the "Hymnus in Dom. III et reliqua Dominicis post Pentecosten usque ad diem 27 Septembris inclusive occurrentibus".
[1105] *Fam.*, X 3, 53.

follow that, in this context, there is a certain semantic equivalence between *hymnus*, *laus* and *carmen*. Let us keep in mind that the very fact that Petrarch uses the term *carmen*, whereas Dante, for example, had used *egloga*, and other mediaeval writers had simply used *cantiones*, must be seen in the light of the common *iunctura*: *canere* = *carmen* = *componere carmina*. Furthermore, the term *carmen* contained references to magic formulae and other ritualistic compositions of a general inspired nature. Indeed, the fact that Petrarch writes that "it is incredible how few days it took me to write it"[1106] is probably more of an indication of the inspired nature of the work than a question of self-praise. It was in fact the *locus* which spurred on his genius, not his genius alone.[1107] Furthermore, the language demonstrates how intimately Petrarch's praising and imitation of Christ is. If the "rising sun" (lux oriens) is a symbol of Christ who triumphantly arrives to disperse the darkness, then Petrarch who "rises to write" (scribere orsus) creates an equation not only between Christ and himself, but also between the thaumaturgical, providential power of Christ's coming and the significance of his *Bucolicum Carmen* (or at least the first eclogue of it).

Part of the significance of the first eclogue, *Parthenias*, might have an adverse effect on Gherardo's life choice, as we can glean from the apparently open doubt, "nescio quidem an pro solatio an pro impedimento solatii tui dicam".[1108] And just as Petrarch had offered a summary of Christ's speech, now he creates an *accessus* to the eclogue by offering two levels of exegesis, a literal one and then an allegorical-moral one.[1109]

[1106] *Fam.*, X 4, 11, "incredibile est quam paucis diebus absolverim".
[1107] *Fam.*, X 4, 11, "tantum ingenio locus calcar addiderat".
[1108] *Fam.*, X 4, 12.
[1109] Cf. Dante's four "disposizioni" in *Cv.*, 2, 1, 2-11, where the four senses are literal, allegorical, moral and anagogical.

The literal exegesis from lines thirteen through to nineteen is fairly obvious. It alludes to Petrarch and Gherardo, "born of the same mother".[1110] Silvius, alias Petrarch, finds his brother, Monicus, alias Gherardo, in a cave (the St-Baume) happily leading a life of "enviable repose" (invidiosum otium) having abandoned his flock and fields. Monicus states that it is Silvius's fault if he still has to "errare per devia silvarum montiumque cacumina"[1111] in amid "asperi colles multo cum labore".[1112] Silvius admits that it is because of "amor muse", that is, the love which a muse or the muses instil in him. Silvius then tells Monicus a tale about two shepherds, one whom he had heard about as a child, the other much later in the form of a florilegium or "breviloquium". We shall learn later that these two shepherds are, respectively, Virgil and Homer.[1113] Silvius has also abandoned everything, not for the "enviable otium" of Monicus's cave, but rather to follow these two other shepherds. Silvius would sooner die than give up striving to reach the top.[1114]

Monicus invites Silvius to enter the cave (Montrieux), to hear a sweeter singing (*dulcior cantus*).[1115] When asked who this singer is, Monicus, "with the coarseness typical of a shepherd"[1116] and "mixing up his words as country folk often do",[1117] describes the homeland of this singer. It is here that Monicus, because of his coarseness and mistakes, falls into an error in the description of the two rivers which he believes to be the Tigris and the Euphrates. This provokes Silvius

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[1110] *Fam.*, X 4, 13, "una eademque fuerat amborum mater".
[1111] *Fam.*, X 4, 14.
[1112] *Fam.*, X 4,13.
[1113] *Fam.*, X 4, 25, "Nam et inde, hoc est deinde, non sine mysterio dictum est, quia Virgilium puer iam, idest non iam infans, deinde autem etate provectior Homerum attigi; is enim qui Homerus vulgo dicitur, alterius nescio cuius scolastici opusculum scias, licet ab homerica *Yliade* sub breviloquio decerptum".
[1114] *Fam.*, X 4, 15, "Itaque propositum sibi esse ad summum niti et vel pervenire vel inter nitendum mori".
[1115] *Fam.*, X 4, 16.
[1116] *Fam.*, X 4, 17, "quasi pastoria ruditate".
[1117] *Fam.*, X 4, 17, "more ruralium sepe in verbis errantium".

(Petrarch)'s correction.[1118] This "flumen", the Jordan, originates from two other rivers, the Jor and the Dan. The Jordan, as Silvius points out in the Eclogue, indicates the river in which "quidam puer hispidus lavit Apollinem", where the "puer hispidus" is John the Baptist (cf. *Gen.* 25, 25, "totus in morem pellis hispidus" describing Esau) and Apollo is Christ. The error committed by Monicus (alias Gherardo), as we shall see better below, is the exegetical key to the entire letter, to Petrarch's polemical stance concerning Gherardo, and to his *reductio ad unum* of Christian and non-Christian letters.

In the allegorical-moral exegesis, Petrarch not only allows Gherardo (and his readers) to penetrate the more recondite meanings of the *Carmen*, but he openly criticizes yet again both western monasticism and Gherardo's life choice.

To stress the difference in life choice between Gherardo pre-conversion and Gherardo post-conversion, Petrarch even modifies the intensity and semantic range of the verb he uses for 'leading his life'. I refer to the phrase *agere vitam*. To say that Gherardo now leads a quiet monastic life, Petrarch writes "Antrum ubi solitarie degit Monicus, Mons Rivi est, ubi tu nunc monasticam vitam **agis** inter speluncas et nemora".[1119] Beforehand, however, Gherardo had led an agitated life with his brother, which Petrarch describes by using the frequentative form of the verb *ago*, that is, "Ibi enim in hoc sancto proposito de quo multa mecum prius **agitaveras**."[1120] This fact also contradicts Petrarch's description of Gherardo's conversion as 'sudden' (repente, improvisa). Gherardo had discussed this life choice at length (multa) with Petrarch before entering the cloister. Might not the "agitaveras" allude to heated discussions between the two brothers? If so, were these discussions carried out in Vaucluse?

[1118] *Fam.*, X 4, 18.
[1119] *Fam.*, X 4, 21.
[1120] *Fam.*, X 4, 21.

The "antrum" in which Monicus is now sitting is the same one in which Mary Magdalene lived out her thirty-year penance. I discussed this in the chapter above dedicated to the female saint.[1121] More than a poetic description of the area of the Sainte-Baume, where Montrieux and the Magdalene's cave are to be found, I believe the description to be more allusive of Vaucluse and Mt Ventoux, where the error previously committed by Monicus, concerning the two rivers or two sources, becomes most pertinent. Silvius's quest to "reach the top" (ad summum) of Virgilian and Homeric eloquence might be an allusion to Petrarch's quest to reach the top of Mt Ventoux. Indeed, the lower-lying "asperi colles" would seem to be analogous to the lower-lying hills around Mt Ventoux allegorically representing the lesser virtues through which - "de virtute in virtutem"[1122] – Petrarch would be able to get up to the peak of Sion where, as *Psalm* 83 teaches us, "videbitur Deus deorum". The substantial equivalence between Virgilian and Homeric poetic perfection on the one hand, and reaching the Son on the other would seem to be this "summum", which in turn supports the hypothesis I advanced when dealing above with the Franciscan ascent of Mt Ventoux concerning the semiological equivalence between Christ's crown of thorns and Petrarch's crown of laurel.[1123] It also supports the hypothesis advanced in my analysis of the *De otio* according to which Petrarch might have been influenced by Barlaam's origenistic concept: "praxis est via versus theoriam".[1124] Indeed, Petrarch writes that the continual climbing up and down the mountain of eloquence is the tension between theory and practice. That is,

> Descensus e montis vertice ad imas valles et ab imis vallibus ascensus in montes, quem de se ipso loquens Silvius refert, est ab altitudine theorice ad practice exercitium et e converso pro varietate affectuum alterna digressio.[1125]

[1121] See pp. 115, 122, n. 492.
[1122] *Fam.*, IV 1, 13.
[1123] See pp. 189; 190, n. 713; 278.
[1124] Origen *in Lucam hom.*, 1, cit. in Gemmiti, 1989, p.123.
[1125] *Fam.*, X 4, 27.

The *Familiaris* X 4, and, therefore, also the eclogue *Parthenias*, also presents other points in common with the Mt Ventoux letter. Petrarch writes:

> **Inaccessum cacumen** ad quod multo sudore Silvium anhelare Monicus exprobando obicit, fame rarioris et ad quam pauci perveniunt, **altitudo est. Deserta quibus vagari Silvius dicitur**, sunt studia; hec vere deserta hodie et vel lucri cupidine derelicta vel ingeniorum desperata segnitie. **Muscosi scopuli** sunt potentes ac divites, patrimonio velut musco obsiti; **fontes sonantes** literati et eloquentes homines dici possunt, quorum ex ingenii scatebris disciplinarum rivuli prodeunt cum sonitu quodam delectabili."[1126]

The "inaccessum cacumen" and the "altitudo" allude to the peak of Mt Ventoux, "Quotiens, putas, illo die, rediens et in tergum versus, cacumen montis aspexi! Et vix unius cubiti altitudo visa est pre altitudine contemplationis humane".[1127] The summit is "inaccessum" inasmuch as the "pastor vociferans" points out, in *Familiaris* IV 1, that "no one before or after him had attempted any similar task".[1128] Indeed, the "altitudo" also corresponds to the "celsitudo" of the summit of Mt Ventoux which represents not only "human contemplation", but also, as Petrarch explicitly states, "the blessed life.[1129] The "deserta quibus vagari Silvius dicitur" allude to the "valles peragratae"[1130] through which Petrarch roams on his own. The "muscosi scopuli" allude to the cliff under which the two brothers have to stop, because it impedes their way.[1131] It would well seem, therefore, that the *Familiaris* X 4, in offering an exegesis of the first eclogue of the *Bucolicum Carmen*, also implicitly refers to the *Familiaris* IV 1 describing the climb of Mt Ventoux. As I stated at the beginning of this chapter, the Mt Ventoux letter is the corollary and anticipation of the 'Gerardine letters'.

[1126] *Fam.*, X 4, 23.
[1127] *Fam.*, IV 1, 33.
[1128] *Fam.*, IV 1, 7, "nec unquam aut ante illud tempus aut postea auditum apud eos quenquam ausum esse similia".
[1129] *Fam.*, IV 1, 13, "Equidem vita, quam beatam dicimus, celso loco sita est".
[1130] *Fam.*, IV 1, 10 "per valles errabam"; 11 "atque iterum peragratis vallibus dum viarum facilem longitudinem sector".
[1131] *Fam.*, IV 1, "non procul inde igitur quadam in rupe subsistimus".

The case of the "fontes sonantes" is even more complex as it also involves the *De otio* and the *Familiaris* IV 1 together. In the *Familiaris* IV 1, Petrarch stops on the side of Mt Ventoux, tired of his brother's laughing at him and tired of his own endless, erring pilgrimage. He simply writes, "Sic sepe delusus quadam in valle consedi". This is where Petrarch rises from "earthly things to extra-earthly things with winged thought".[1132] In the *De otio*, as we saw in the first chapter, Petrarch explains that it is in such a place that one truly proceeds both *de virtute in virtutem* and *de voluptate minori in voluptatem summam*. It is here, in the *De otio*, that he hypothesises,

> Si enim fesso viatori tam suavis est cespes herbosus et sub umbra arboris exiguus fons, quale est inter mortalis vite molestias invenisse "fontem aque salientis in vitam eternam" et umbram illam, sub qua non ad brevis hore spatium neque ab estu solis tantum, sed in eternum ab omni adversitate protegamur et ab omni metu?[1133]

We learn from the coeval *De otio* that the very simple syntagma, "in valle" in the *Familiaris* IV 1 contains the *locus amoenus* which is the true site of Petrarch's conversion. As we saw in our analysis of the *De otio*, where Petrarch contaminates a Pauline verse, the Sapiential image of the stag and the classical torment of Tantalus dying of thirst,[1134] that in this valley there is a source of spring water. It is thanks to this spring water that the weary pilgrim can continue his climb up to the Son.

As Petrarch explicitly writes in the *Familiaris* X 4, the water represents the "literati et eloquentes homines".[1135] In the next letter to Gherardo, the *Familiaris* X 5, Petrarch will further develop the concept according to which these "eloquent men

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[1132] *Fam.*, IV 1, 12.
[1133] *De otio*, p.774.
[1134] *De otio*, p.720, "Ita ergo cum Apostolo sitibundi recurramus ad fontem gratie, ne in nostra ariditate pereamus."; cf. *Ps.*, 42(43) & *Hebr.*, 4, 16.
[1135] *Fam.*, X 4, 23.

of letters" are very scarce. In the context of this letter, however, it becomes obvious from the language, especially from the recurring 'water metaphor', and then from the explicit explanation Petrarch himself affords, that the two primary sources of such eloquence are Virgil and Homer who, in turn, derive their poetic prowess from Apollo. In analogy with the diffusion described above of "sacra cenobia", likened by Petrarch to "rivulets gushing forth from the source, St Benedict",[1136] here there are "rivulets of knowledge [which] then flow on from the genius of these two sources with a delightful sound".[1137] The 'water metaphor' would seem to place the two phenomena, the diffusion of "sacra cenobia" on the one hand, and the diffusion of Homeric-Virgilian eloquence on the other, on the same plane. We also saw above, however, that the fundamental literary source for the diffusion of "sacra cenobia" was, through Dante's "sí largo fiume", Virgil. We may also notice that while, on the one hand, in the fourteenth century, western monasticism was enjoying a boom period of building[1138] but a depression of intellectual endeavour, Homeric-Virgilian style eloquence, as Petrarch will state even more strongly in the next letter, was definitely flagging. At this point, I should also like to formulate another hypothesis. Seeing that Petrarch, both here and elsewhere,[1139] constantly insists on the fact that he and Gherardo came from the same womb and mother, might not the 'water metaphor' also refer to them, as to two different rivers gushing forth from the same source? Might these two rivers not be, respectively, the 'river of Homeric-Virgilian eloquence', on the one hand, and the 'river of Davidic verse',

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[1136] See pp. 128, n. 518; 225, n. 819.

[1137] *ibid.*, "fontes sonantes literati et eloquentes homines dici possunt, quorum ex igenii scatebris disciplinarum rivuli prodeunt cum sonitu quodam delectabili".

[1138] See p. 325, n. 1225.

[1139] Cf. *Ecl.*, 1 5, "Una fuit genetrix"; *Fam.*, X 3, 5, "Spero autem in Illo qui ab utero matris tue"; *Fam.*, X 4, 22, "unam fuisse genitricem amborum, quin utrunque insuper parentem, non allegoria sed veritas nuda est"; *Fam.*, X 5, 3 "eosdem parentes, non idem sidus fuisse nascentibus. Nimis dissimiles sumus, frater, nimis impares partus eadem alvus effudit, ut intelligi possit non mortalium parentum sed Eterni Patris munus esse quod sumus. Quid enim pater nisi vile semen? Quid nisi fedum mater habitaculum?"; *Fam.*, XVI 8, 10, "gaudeam tamen ac glorier michi talem sanguinis atque uteri fuisse

on the other? If this hypothesis were correct, then the ensuing argument in Petrarch's allegorical-moral exegesis could well be seen as an attempt to sail up the river again (Illic a corporeis ad incorporea volucri cogitatione *transiliens*)[1140] in search for their common source. Given that the two rivers, which represent two brothers, derive from the one source, which is ultimately Christ, this source could also be considered a type of Virgilian *antiqua mater*.[1141]

The common source is a question of inspiration. When Monicus tells Silvius about the two rivers and one source, but then corrects himself saying that it is one river springing from two sources, Silvius recognises the substantial equivalence between King David, the "cantor" of the *Psalms*, and the river in which a "puer hispidus" once washed Apollo, the ultimate source for all non-Christian poetry.[1142] As Petrarch explicitly states, the "hirsute youth" is John the Baptist, who is designated as "puer", not because he was young, but, rather, because he was a "virgin, pure and free from sin".[1143] Inasmuch as Apollo is the son of Jove, he is also said to be the god of genius and wisdom (*ingenium ac sapientia*). Just as Petrarch equates the forest nymph and protectress of shepherds, Pales, to the mother of God, Mary,[1144] here he takes Apollo to be an allegorical equivalent to Jesus Christ, "true god and true Son of God".[1145] The fact that Christ is "sapientia Patris" will be important in the next letter regarding the diffraction of knowledge into the *trivium* and *quadrivium*. But these points, together with the historical and allegorical

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consortem"; *De otio*, p.568, "vos "priusquam formaret in utero"".

[1140] *Fam.*, IV 1, 12.

[1141] Cf. *Aen.*, IV 96, "antiquam exquirite matrem".

[1142] *Fam.*, X 4, 18.

[1143] *Fam.*, X 4, 30, "virgo purus innocens".

[1144] *Fam.*, X 4, 24.

[1145] *Fam.*, X 4, 30, "Apollo autem, filius Jovis, dicitur ingenii deus; per quem Iesum Cristum accipio, verum Deum verum Dei filium".

representation of Jerusalem in the Psalms, "are clear and obvious" for all those who are "provecti" (from proveho = to promote, to advance) in this subject.[1146]

Obviously, Gherardo is not as yet *provectus* in such matters. He is, after all, characterised by "quasi pastoria ruditas" and "mixes up his words as the country-folk often do".[1147] This is not, however, entirely Gherardo's own fault. We saw above how few instruments of learning the *seminarium* of Montrieux places at Gherardo's disposal.[1148] Little wonder that he gets confused in his biblical geography regarding the Jordan River! In addition, there is also the issue of institutionalised deception. I am referring again to the question of the two rivers or two sources, but in a different section of the letter. Petrarch writes that many other monastic orders deceive potential novices into entering the cloister, but the Carthusian Order certainly does not. Indeed, no one enters the Carthusian Order unwillingly: "Limen intra quod Silvium Monicus invitat, Cartusiensium ordo est, quem nemo certe deceptus, ut multos ex aliis ordinibus, nemo intrat invitus."[1149] The fact that Petrarch actually has to state this is suspicious. Why make such a statement if it is obvious? Why change the "coactus" of Parthenias 48[1150] into "deceptus" of the *Familiaris* X 4? Why risk slandering the other monastic orders if it is not true? Why interrupt the natural flow of the exegesis to mention such alarming practices in western monasticism? The answer is again given in the language of the following account. When explaining that Monicus was referring to the Tigris and the Euphrates in Armenia, which come from the one source, and the Jordan in Judaea, which is the one river from two different sources, the Jor and Dan, Petrarch writes that Monicus has been "deceived into error": "Fluvii duo uno de fonte, quorum

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[1146] *Fam.*, X 4, 31, "sed in eo studio provectis omnia clara et aperta sunt".
[1147] *Fam.*, X 4, 17.
[1148] See pp. 51, n. 175, 252, n. 914.
[1149] *Fam.*, X 4, 28.
[1150] *Ecl.*, 1, 48-49, "nemo antra coactus/ nostra petit".

primo quidem Monicus **errore decipitur**, sunt Tigris et Eufrates, noti amnes Armenie".[1151] Why use the same verb, *decipio*, only two sentences away from the first instance of the verb supposedly used in a different meaning? Obviously Petrarch is alluding to the fact that Gherardo has been deceived or tricked into error by the Carthusian Order which has not allowed him to advance (proveho) in his intellectual development, even at the most elementary level of biblical geography (between Babylon and Jerusalem). Furthermore, not only is the elementary nature of the concept sarcastically stressed by the adjective "noti" in "noti amnes Armenie", but so too does Petrarch's anger sarcastically emerge in the adverb "certe" in "Cartusiensium ordo est, quem nemo *certe* deceptus [...] intrat".[1152] After all, in *Parthenias*, it is Monicus who has reluctantly listened to Silvius's defence, and not Silvius, who defines the "limen" of *Cartusia* as "durum".[1153]

Petrarch's sarcasm and animosity towards what Gherardo has become also emerges in his designation of Monicus as "quasi monoculus" as if he were a Cyclops: "ex Cyclopibus".[1154] This false etymology obtained via syncopation raises, however, a problem of sources. No Cyclops is to be found in classical mythology by the name of Monicus. The only 'Monychus' is a centaur.[1155] It is thought, instead, that Petrarch found authorization for his Monicus in a giant (*gigas*) mentioned in a scholium, in which Petrarch might have been able to read, "Monychus hic gigas fuit, qui proeliatus est contra deos".[1156] If this is true, then the first question is why Petrarch should have wanted to equate Gherardo, a Psalm-singing monk, to a giant who fought against the heavens? The answer, again, lies in the correct exegesis of

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[1151] *Fam.*, X 4, 29.
[1152] *Fam.*, X 4, 28.
[1153] *Ecl.*, 1 46.
[1154] *Fam.*, X 4, 20.
[1155] Ov. *met.*, 12, 498-513; Lucan. 6, 386-394.
[1156] Schol. Ivv. 1, 7-11, cit. in De Venuto, 1990, pp.xxvii-xxviii.

Petrarch's letter in the light of the general polemic, running through the *Familiares*, regarding Gherardo's life choice as opposed to Petrarch's.

We have two eyes, Petrarch continues, one for looking at *celestia*, one for looking at *terrena*. Gherardo has gouged out one of his eyes and only kept "the better one"[1157] in order to monistically keep his attention exclusively on the matters of the spirit. The opposition *celestia-terrena* recalls the *Somnium Scipionis* in which Africanus tells his grandson, "haec caelestia semper spectato, illa humana contemnito".[1158] It would seem that Gherardo, according to Petrarch, has taken this neo-Platonic dichotomy too seriously. Just as Petrarch's poetic and theological climb up to Sion and the Son consists in oscillating between the summit and the valleys, that is, between theory and practice, and St Francis would analogously meditate 'in solitudine' on the Verna but also live and work among the throng, so too should Gherardo have maintained both eyes in order to "see more clearly", as the invitation "vacate et videte" of the *De otio* seems to suggest.

Petrarch does not say explicitly at first that the one-eyed Cyclops, to whom he compares Gherardo-Monicus, is Polyphemus, the Cyclops blinded by Ulysses in Sicily. This is to be gleaned in the allegorical-moral exegesis via the apostrophe which Silvius addresses to Polyphemus, "te Polipheme".[1159] That is to say, especially via the reference to the defeat of Hannibal (Polyphemus) in Sicily by Scipio, but also to Monicus's cave, "tuis iam vi stravisse sub antris",[1160] it is possible to infer from the apostrophe that it is as if Silvius were directly addressing Monicus. Here Petrarch reveals what he had concealed beforehand in the first interpretation, that is, that Polyphemus equals Hannibal who had also become one-eyed,

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[1157] *Fam.*, X 4, 20.
[1158] Cic., *rep.*, 6, 20.
[1159] *Ecl.*, 1, 115.
[1160] *ibid.*

"monoculus", after having lost an eye in Italy.[1161] In other words, Gherardo = Monicus = Polyphemus = Hannibal. Along the same lines of the opposition between Gherardo and Petrarch presented, respectively, as Polyphemus vs. Ulysses, we can now establish another classical opposition. That is, if Gherardo is Hannibal and Petrarch is Scipio (as we can infer from his poem *Africa*, explicitly mentioned and briefly discussed in the letter)[1162], then the opposition between the two brothers and, ultimately, between their two different ways of seeking God, is comparable to the Second Punic War between Carthage and Rome! (whose outcome will be the third Punic War, the victory of Rome and the destruction of Carthage: *Carthago delenda est*!) Whereas Gherardo alias Hannibal has tried to take Rome (i.e. reach God) by skirting around it and returning to live "in litore afro", Petrarch alias Scipio *is* Rome and *Romanitas* living "de litore adverso" that is, on the "litus italicum".[1163] The phrase Petrarch uses for their common origin yet contrasting life choices could not have been more suitable: "non allegoria sed veritas nuda est".[1164]

One last aspect deserves some discussion. In this second, allegorical-moral exegesis, Petrarch has decided not to reveal the more recondite meanings of the other theological and poetical issues alluded to in the *Carmen*, such as the meaning of the fields of ash strewn along the banks of the Jordan and the ultimate source of inspiration in this Apollonian Christ. Is the ash an allusion to the above-mentioned episode of Amaryllis who must cast her embers into the river?[1165] Is it, instead, an allusion to the combusted cities of Sodom and Gomorrah?[1166] Petrarch does not tell Gherardo (or us). But then, is this letter not supposed to be for Gherardo's greater intellectual benefit? Is it not supposed to somehow urge him, as in the *compellatio*

[1161] *Fam.*, X 4,32, "Monoculus [...] post oculum in Italia amissum".
[1162] For Petrarch = Scipio, see also Dotti, 1992, pp.98-9.
[1163] *Fam.*, X 4, 32-33.
[1164] *Fam.*, X 4, 22.
[1165] See p. 105, n. 437.

of the last letter, to scrutinize the text more closely and understand on his own? Whereas in the first letter, the *Familiaris* X 3, Petrarch explains everything to Gherardo, even via summaries, in this letter he does so only in part; the *magister* has imparted the principle for his *discipulus* to apply to the rest. After all, the letter itself ends with the almost peremptory order to think these issues through: "Reliqua cogitando percipies".

The *Familiaris* X 5 *Ad eundem, gratulatio de illius provectu multiplexque varietas ac discordia studiorum atque actuum humanorum.* (11 June 1352)

Obviously between this letter and the last, there has been an advancement in Gherardo's critical prowess. Gherardo has advanced in his understanding of the theological and poetical issues contained in the last letter. He is "provectus", perhaps not as much as the truly "provecti" in *Familiaris* X 5,31, for whom "omnia clara et aperta sunt", but at least he has made some progress, he has sprung to action. Indeed, after the *quinquennium* of absolute silence, he has sent for his brother's scrutiny a letter full of *sententiae* of the Desert Fathers, together with a small box made of box-wood which he had fashioned himself, described by Petrarch with a Virgilian expression, "buxea pyxis torno volubili perpolita".[1167]

The letter opens with certain expressions of praise and enthusiasm, such as "fructuosa epistola", "sacrum ingenium tuum", "magno cum gaudeo recepi"[1168] "gratulor tibi et michi",[1169] and "optima et saluberrima esse que dicis".[1170] They are

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[1166] See nn. 438-440.

[1167] *Fam.*, X 5, 1, "Geminum otii tui munus, amantissime frater, **buxeam** pyxidem **torno volubili** perpolitam, opus manuum tuarum, et fructuosam simul epystolam multis Patrum refertam compactamque sententiis, sacri ingenii tui testem". Cf. *Aen.*, 7, 382, "**volubile buxum**", which describes, instead, a spinning-top. Cf. also Virgil's *Ecl.*, 3, 36-39, "pocula ponam/ fagina, caelatum divini opus Alcimedontis,/ lenta quibus **torno facili** super addita vitis". Indeed, Petrarch prefers the "volubili" to the "facili", seeing that Servius, against Donatus, reads "facilis" attributing it not to "torno", but to "vitis". See also Virgil's *Georg.*, 2, 449, "**torno** rasile **buxum**".

[1168] *Fam.*, X 5, 1.

[1169] *Fam.*, X 5, 2.

mirrored towards the end with "elegantissime tractata" and "stili robur".[1171] Such expressions, however, are belied by the content and the other lessons to be imparted throughout the text. Indeed, the general tone underlying the letter reveals Petrarch's scorn regarding Montrieux, which has not provided Gherardo with any sound instruments of learning. On the contrary, the meagre preceptor whom the charterhouse has furnished has taught Gherardo not only how to speak and how to act, but even how to express desire.[1172] According to Constable, the terms most stressed in Petrarch's thoughts concerning monasticism were freedom, volition and experience.[1173] And yet the Carthusian order had reduced the promising ex-university student Gherardo to someone incapable of expressing independent thought! Petrarch analyses Gherardo's letter defining it as "persimilis animo atque actibus".[1174] If Gherardo's soul has become submissive and devoid of any control over its own volition, then Petrarch's implicit comparison can be read in the following way: Gherardo's letter must be similar to the only deed or *actus* mentioned – the small box. In other words, Gherardo's attempt at patristic erudition deserves praise from his brother the *magister*, given both his position as a lowly monk without access to instruments of learning and his five-year-long silence. In itself, however, Gherardo's attempt is also essentially worthless. Indeed, it is this sense that the Virgilian expression used to describe Gherardo's "actus" is not without significance. The "volubile buxum" is a spinning top which Virgil likens to Amata who has been poisoned by the furious Allecto. Amata then goes off to join the orgy in honour of Bacchus, and thus obstructs the god-willed course of Aeneas's destiny and, therefore, the founding of Rome. Even though Gherardo's wooden box

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[1170] *Fam.*, X 5, 4.
[1171] *Fam.*, X 5, 22.
[1172] *Fam.*, X 5, 22, "quo satis admoneor alium quondam habuisse te in monasterio preceptorem quam in seculo habuisti; nimirum ille [*scil.* preceptor] te loqui docuit qui docuit operari, qui docuit velle".
[1173] Constable, 1980, p.87.

can be interpreted as, perhaps, a move from inertia to some form of action, inasmuch as it represents his attempt at literary action, this box is, therefore, a move in the wrong direction.

Gherardo's letter is worthless because it does not express any independent thought of his own. Just as Gherardo "intentis auribus stabat" ready to read/listen and passively accept whatever Petrarch had to say to him about Augustine in the *Familiaris* IV 1, here he has obviously limited himself to copying down verbatim the words and thoughts of the Desert Fathers. Naturally Petrarch and any other Christian would find the content "optimus et saluberrimus" but not original! This is why Petrarch, towards the end of the letter, invites Gherardo to say something of his own: "posse etiam te de tuo aliquid dicere", where this "aliquid" is something which might be useful both to himself and to others.[1175]

If "pietas est sapientia",[1176] then our *studium* should always be "Deum nosse et colere".[1177] Indeed, Petrarch reinforces the same concept he had introduced in the previous letter. In the previous letter he wrote: "vestigande divinitatis studium - quod naturaliter inest homini", whereas now he adds that God created men, Christians and non-Christians alike, with the "most noble and most holy desire to know and worship Him".[1178] The adverb "naturaliter" recalls the famous phrase by Tertullian in his *Apologeticum*, "anima naturaliter Christiana",[1179] which indicated that all men, regardless of the cultural milieu and age in which they lived, felt a divinely implanted urge to seek out God. This is the underlying message of the episode in *Acts* in which Paul tells the Athenians that the "nova doctrina" he has

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[1174] *Fam.*, X 5, 22.
[1175] *Fam.*, X 5, 24.
[1176] *Fam.*, X 5, 8. Cf. *Ps.*, 110, 10; *Ecl.*,1, 20; I *Tim.*, 6, 3.
[1177] *Fam.*, X 5, 8.
[1178] *Fam.*, X 5, 8, ""pietas est sapientia" ad quam omnium nobilissimum ac sacratissimum studium hominibus datum erat"; cf. *Fam.*, X 4, 3.
[1179] Tert., *apol.*, 17, 5.

come to reveal to them is really the god whom they and their poets had always worshipped as the "Ignotus Deus". This god, who had always been in their pantheon, was really the Christian God of all times and peoples.[1180] Closer to Petrarch's times, the 'naturalness' of the urge to seek out God is seen by Dante, in his *De vulgari eloquentia*, to authorise the superiority of the vernacular tongue to Latin as an anagogical instrument. The "naturalitade" of the volgare illustre is, therefore, "integral in God's plan of acquisition of wisdom".[1181] Dante states that, compared to Latin, "nobilior est vulgaris quia naturalis est".[1182] Dante's concept of *nobilitas* is, therefore, akin to Guido Cavalcanti's concept of "perfezion", whereby perfection is the "natural" blending of "vertute" and "ragione".[1183] The reinforcement of the concept of this *naturalitas* of the urge to seek God through *studium* would seem to suggest that Gherardo has turned his back on the divine gift which God has bestowed on him as a man created by God with this specific goal in mind. We might say about Gherardo in Cavalcantian terms, "Di sua potenza segue spesso morte/ se forte la vertù fosse impedita,/ la quale aita la contraria via: [...] A simel pò valer quand'om l'oblia".[1184]

In the same context, Petrarch then embarks on a denouncement of *vanitas*. Our vanity, he writes, has transformed *theologia* into *dyalectica* and *sapientia* into *scientia*. Hence *sapientia* has been broken down into the various disciplines of the *trivium* and *quadrivium*. Indeed, many who would feign to profess to know and worship God can really be subdivided into the following categories: hedonists ("voluptatibus dediti"), and those occupied in the active life ("actuose vite studiis intenti"). These first two categories of activities fall under Petrarch's general

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[1180] *Act.*, 17, 16-34.
[1181] Chiappelli *et al.*, 1983-1986, pp.26-27.
[1182] *VE.*, 1, 1, 4; *Cv.*, 4, 2, 11.
[1183] *Donna me prega*, vv.29-30, 33.
[1184] *ibid.*, 35-36,42.

heading of "artes mechanice".[1185] Even though some philosophers have accorded a certain ranking to these *artes* in the field of philosophical endeavour, Petrarch dismisses them very quickly as unworthy of his attention. There is then a third category composed of very few people truly dedicated to *sapientia* and *contemplatio*. Whereas for the first two categories Petrarch respectively uses the verbs "videre" and "cernere", for this third category he writes, "audimus sepius quam videmus".[1186] This reveals more than simple vague suspicion about the sincerity of those who define themselves as being "dedicated to the pursuit of wisdom and contemplation". Indeed, Petrarch then writes that this third category or way of life is effectively pursued by so few that "almost no recent footprint has been left".[1187] Although no specific allusion in this context has been made to monasticism, we must remember that the entire letter was supposedly sent to Gherardo and, therefore, to the prior of Montrieux (who filtered all incoming correspondence). Any open criticism would not have been tolerated. Even though it may be argued that Petrarch's analysis of humanity was confined to those operating in the *seculum*, implicitly, however, the open, categorical nature of the statement "almost no recent footprint has been left" does not necessarily exclude monasticism either. Indeed, the natural development of the assertion denounces *Cartusia* of not truly being dedicated to the pursuit of wisdom and contemplation. Simply transcribing the words and thoughts of others, as the Carthusian preceptor has taught Gherardo, will not advance wisdom. On the contrary, Petrarch implies that such mechanical transcription should more correctly be numbered amongst the *artes mechanicae* not worthy of his attention!

[1185] *Fam.*, X 5, 6-7.
[1186] *Fam.*, X 5, 8.
[1187] *Fam.*, X 5, 8, "hac tertia nullus aut tam pauci, ut prope iam nullo recenti vestigio signata sit".

It is because of such considerations that Petrarch tries to teach Gherardo and inert monasticism the way through philosophy, poetics and theology to reach the Son in Sion. Elsewhere we have demonstrated how Petrarch actually operates as a substitute preceptor for Gherardo from outside the walls of *Carthusia*.[1188] Indeed, it is about a private preceptor that Petrarch writes in the letter to Francesco Nelli which is analysed above.[1189] The preceptor in question is, however, only generically designated as the "geometricus preceptor" appointed to the royal prince, Alexander the Great.[1190] Via the technique known in classical times as ζηλος, which placed the onus of inferring sources and possible hidden messages on the personal culture of one's readers,[1191] Petrarch does not reveal the fact that Alexander's private tutor was none other than Aristotle. Such 'zeal' is, therefore, at the basis of Petrarch's teaching method. It is also the justification for the *explicit* of the *Familiaris* X 4 to Gherardo we saw above, the peremptory "Reliqua cogitando percipies".[1192] Having been posed a question of geometry, Aristotle answers his regal pupil that "such things are equally obscure for everybody".[1193] Petrarch takes this as an extremely "elegant" answer inasmuch as it points out that one's status does not automatically help one's intelligence. There is need for "ingenium studio adiutum". In the same context, Petrarch has implicitly made two comparisons: I: Petrarch has "zealously" compared himself to Aristotle, the Philosopher *par excellence*, in the role of private tutor; II: Petrarch has compared himself to the "obscure" elements of Aristotle's geometrical theorem. He does this by pre-empting the elegant answer given to Alexander by Aristotle with the sentence, "iuvat a paucis videri, quantoque a

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[1188] Lokaj 1999. See also here pp. 137; 311, n. 1172; 314.
[1189] *Fam.*, XIII 5.
[1190] *Fam.*, XIII 5, 21, "meministi ut Alexander Macedo geometricum preceptorem roget".
[1191] For the presence of such "zeal" in Petrarch, see Gasparotto, 1967-8, p.312.
[1192] See p. 309.
[1193] *Fam.*, XIII 5, 21, "Hec [...] eque omnibus obscura sunt".

paucioribus videor, tanto ipse michi carior sum".[1194] The concept is similar, therefore, to the enigmatic line in *RVF* 105, 17, "intendami chi po', ch'i' m'intend'io". Not only is Petrarch the ideal tutor, even sought for the same qualities by the pope, but he is also a subject to be studied as he would have Gherardo consult any written text, even the Bible and Desert Fathers.

The *Familiaris* X 5 is on discord – *de discordia*. It is here, in fact, that Petrarch explains the reasons for the fundamental differences between himself and Gherardo. In all the *Familiares* analysed above, one of the recurring themes has been the fact that Petrarch and Gherardo were both born of the same womb, and yet are so different. As Quinones states for the Alberti brothers of *Inferno* XXXII 49-58, who "D'un corpo usciro", "this elementary and natural basis for union makes all the more hideous their later division".[1195] We have seen that Petrarch constantly presents Gherardo as the luckier of the two and himself as the one left to sin. Whereas the "right hand of the Most High" has saved Gherardo from the clutches of earthly worries, illness, poverty, death and every other conceivable horrible task, Petrarch must, instead, take on life as a Herculean feat with his own feeble forces. We have also seen, however, that Petrarch would not have preferred it any other way. He knew that his life choice was the better of the two, for Gherardo's was intellectually and, therefore, spiritually inert.

Here in the *Familiaris* X 5 Petrarch finally admits that being born of the same womb is simply not pertinent in the determination of life choice. That is, he comforts my hypothesis that the polarity of the dichotomy between the two brothers is purely rhetorical and, therefore, to be reversed. He writes,

> Unum inter duas gratulationes est quod doleam, quod lugeam, quod querar: eosdem parentes, non idem sidus fuisse nascentibus. Nimis dissimiles sumus, frater, nimis impares

[1194] *Fam.*, X 5, 20; cf. *Fam.*, XIII 5, 12.
[1195] Quinones, 1994, p.26.

> partus eadem alvus effudit, ut intelligi possit non mortalium parentum sed Eterni Patris munus esse quod sumus. Quid enim pater nisi vile semen? quid nisi fedum mater habitaculum? Deus animam, Deus vitam, Deus intellectum, Deus appetitum boni, Deus arbitrii libertatem dedit; quicquid sanctum, quicquid religiosum, quicquid pium, quicquid excellens habet humana natura, totum ab Illo est[1196]

That the two brothers were not born under the same star is a question of God's will. It is, to be more precise, a gift (munus) from God himself. Why, however, should Petrarch then add the catalogue of other gifts (soul, life, intellect, the natural urge towards good, free will) if there is not another message? About life and soul, there is no discussion. The last three elements of the catalogue, however, demand attention. Through the above-analysed 'meministi series' and elsewhere,[1197] it could be argued that, before Gherardo entered the cloister, the two brothers, who spent their youth together at university in Montpellier, in Bologna and then after university in Avignon and possibly even in Vaucluse, who composed sonnets together dedicating them to 'muliercule', who had had decent tutors,[1198] and who were 'effeminately' worldly together, also had the same intellectual potential. Petrarch argues, both in this letter and in the previous one, that man *naturaliter* strives to know and worship God, (appetitus boni). The question of how one strives to know and worship God is not a question of some sudden divine decision, a "mutatio dexterae Excelsi", but, rather, a question of free will. "Arbitrii libertas" is the last and, therefore, most salient element in the catalogue of gifts which God has bestowed on mankind. In other words, Gherardo has *freely willed* to enter the cloister as an expression of his choice of "appetitus boni".

[1196] *Fam.*, X 5, 3.

[1197] See pp. 101, 273, 287.

[1198] Notice that in the above-quoted passage, *Fam.*, X 5, 22, Petrarch compares the tutor *Cartusia* has provided, with an earlier tutor whom Gherardo had had "in seculo". Perhaps Petrarch was thinking of Convenevole da Prato, or even of himself.

The discussion of discord in the letter, however, alludes to this very choice. We have already seen the discord among the opinions of those who think they are pursuing *sapientia* and *contemplatio*, but who are really allowing *sapientia* to be corrupted and diffracted into the seven liberal arts by *vanitas*. There is a third way, but very few indeed walk along it. Most people, in fact, prefer vain beauty, but this leads to strife. Indeed, Petrarch points out that it was because of the choice being allotted to Venus, and not to either Juno or Minerva, that the resulting outcome of the competition, the Trojan War, was so disastrous.[1199] Petrarch continues saying that the "appetitus boni", presented now as "humana curiositas", walks along these three pathways very differently: "humana curiositas aliter atque aliter multumque diversis passibus incedit, in quibus omnibus studiorum eminet infinita dissensio".[1200] But even within the one man there is discord among his "vota". That is to say, "an old man no longer wants what he wanted as a young man; we no longer want in winter what we wanted in summer; we no longer want today what we wanted yesterday; we no longer want in the evening what we wanted in the morning; or now what we wanted only an hour ago".[1201] The following "Sed iam satis evagatus sum; ad te, frater, Augustinumque tuum redeo" would seem to suggest that Petrarch has not been referring to Gherardo at all, but, rather, to any one man. If this were the case, then why use the specific term "vota"? Seeing that the verb *voveo* means 'to wish', 'to choose', 'to promise', might not it be implicitly referred also to Gherardo's life choice, to his wish to enter Montrieux, that is, to his *vows*? Is Petrarch alluding to a certain fickleness or change in Gherardo's vows, which he

[1199] *Fam.*, X 5, 14, "Hoc equidem importari volunt per certamen illud trium dearum, in quo voluptuosus arbiter electus, falso penitus sed vulgari iudicio, Venerem Iunoni pretulit ac Minerve, et precium iudice dignum fuit, voluptas blanda sed brevis, dulce principium amari exitus."
[1200] *Fam.*, X 5, 13.
[1201] *Fam.*, X 5, 16.

had taken upon entering the Carthusian Order, to learn to know and worship God? Is this why Monicus cals the "limen" of Montrieux "durum"?

The answer lies in Petrarch's invitation for Gherardo to write something of his own. As we saw above, this invitation is explicitly contained in the expression "posse etiam te de tuo aliquid dicere".[1202] It is here that Petrarch, the self-appointed tutor, also introduces to Gherardo the Horatian concept of *iunctura*. As I discussed in the chapter on the *De otio*, it is the specific type of *iunctura* or combination of ideas and words taken from other authors that makes one's work special, that creates new literature and advances (*provectus*) civilisation.[1203] It is the Horatian *callida iunctura* which differentiates Petrarch and Gherardo. After all, whereas Gherardo has limited himself to transcribing the words and thoughts of a few Desert Fathers and, perhaps, St Augustine, Petrarch has demonstrated that by taking from Seneca, Socrates, Aristotle, Cicero, Terence, Horace and King David, he can produce something new and useful not only for Gherardo, but also for his future readers. This is the meaning of the "imo vero permulta et tibi et aliis profutura" he peremptorily writes to Gherardo.

The last issue I shall confront here is of paramount importance, not only for Petrarch's relationship with his brother and, therefore, with his own stance as an uncloistered intellectual, but also for the history of the development of late Latin and early Italian poetics and rhetoric *tout court*. For this reason, I should like to limit my discussion here to a mere acknowledgement of its significance. I am referring to the role carried out by the Holy Ghost. Petrarch invites his brother to moderate his "verecundia", which we might translate in this context as 'modesty', seeing that Petrarch himself plays with the two terms as almost interchangeable

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[1202] *Fam.*, X 5, 24, cit. here p. 312, n. 1176.

[1203] *ars* 48b, "In verbis etiam tenuis cautusque serendis dixeris egregie, notum si callida verbum reddiderit iunctura novum."

synonyms– "modestissima verecundia tua verecundissimaque modestia".[1204] By easing off the hold on his modesty, Gherardo should then dare to add his name to those of the "maiores", that is, of the Apostles, whom the Holy Ghost made "diserti": "eodem Spiritu dictante qui disertos illos fecit".[1205] *Dissero* means 'to speak clearly', 'to be well-spoken', 'to logically argue'. The verb is used, for example, in *Acts*, when St Paul "reasoned with the Jews out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ".[1206] The quote, however, which Petrarch explicitly takes from Matthew 10,20, refers to the pneumatic power of the Holy Ghost in the mission of the Apostles throughout the world. Indeed, the paragraph from which the quote is taken begins with the famous, "Ecce ego mitto vos sicut oves luporum. Estote ergo prudentes sicut serpentes et simplices sicut columbae."[1207] When the Apostles found themselves in trouble, they were not even to think of what they ought to say, for it would be given to them at the right moment. That is,

> Cum autem tradent vos, nolite cogitare quomodo aut quid loquamini; dabitur enim vobis in illa hora quid loquamini. Non enim vos estis qui loquimini, sed Spiritus Patris **vestri**, qui loquitur in vobis.[1208]

Petrarch has, however, introduced a variant into the received text. His variant is "sed spiritus Patris **mei**", rather than Jerome's "vestri". Every Latin version of the passage, including the *Vetus Latina*, has "vestri", except Ambrose who writes "sed Pater **meus**, qui loquitur in vobis".[1209] The message in Petrarch, though perhaps blasphemous in the fourteenth century, is clear: the invitation is for Gherardo to

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[1204] *Fam.*, X 5, 24.
[1205] *ibid.*
[1206] *Act.*, 17, 2-3, "Secundum consuetudinem autem Paulus introivit ad eos [*scil.* Iudeos] et per sabbata tria **disserebat** eis de Scripturis adaperiens et insinuans quia Christum oportuit pati et resurgere a mortuis, et quia hic est Iesus Christus, quem ego adnuntio vobis".
[1207] *Mt.*, 10, 16.

become eloquent like the Apostles, that is, to allow the Holy Ghost to guide his literary production.

This passage in the *Familiares* on the intervention of the Holy Ghost may probably constitute yet another parallel with the *De otio*. I refer to Petrarch's insistence upon the substantial equality in inspiration between the prophets and the classical poets, especially in their power of prediction. In referring to the Eritrean Sibyl, the Cumaean Sibyl and King David, Petrarch states that "hauddubie uno spiritu loquebantur".[1210] Like the prophets and saints who "did not even understand what they were saying",[1211] even Virgil 'foresaw' the Advent of Christ in *Bucolics* 4,67 (*Iam redit et Virgo...*), even though he did not know anything about Christ or the Hebrew faith.

This daring new role of literary inspiration attributed to the Holy Ghost recalls an analogous passage in John, where Jerome translates: "Paraclitus autem Spiritus sanctus, quem mittet Pater in nomine meo, ille vos docebit omnia et suggeret vobis omnia, quaecumque dixero vobis".[1212] Indeed, the incorrect use of "mei" in Petrarch's quote, rather than the use of "vestri" in Jerome, probably indicates a certain contamination with this passage from John. The point is, however, that the two passages we have just seen allude to the Pentecost, the seventh Sunday after Easter in which the Holy Ghost descended upon the Apostles, who then began to speak in tongues. Indeed, here, in the "eloquium" infused into the Apostles by the Holy Ghost, we might find the source for Petrarch's description of the Apostles as "diserti". In the *Acts* there is written;

> Et cum complerentur dies Pentecostes, erant omnes pariter in eodem loco; et factus est repente de caelo sonus tamquam

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[1208] *Mt.*, 10, 19-20.
[1209] Ambr., *in ps.*, 118 col. 1099.
[1210] *De otio*, p.634.
[1211] *ibid.*, "quid dicerent ignorantes".
[1212] *Io.*, 14, 26.

> advenientis spiritus vehementis et replevit totam domum ubi erant sedentes. Et apparuerunt illis dispertitae linguae tamquam ignis, seditque supra singulos eorum. Et repleti sunt omnes Spiritu sancto et coeperunt loqui variis linguis, prout Spiritus sanctus dabat **eloquii** illis.[1213]

Petrarch invites Gherardo to receive the *eloquium* of the Holy Ghost, presumably as he himself has received it for his own literary production. This might also be the explanation for the substitution of "vestri" with "mei" in his quote. That is, the "mei" might not be due to mere contamination, seeing, after all, that Petrarch correctly writes "qui loquitur in *vobis*", but as an indication of *his* life choice compared to Gherardo's.

Such 'holy inspiration' recalls Dante's famous description of stilnovistic inspiration, that is, "I' mi son un, che quando/ Amor mi spira, noto, e a quel modo/ ch'e' *ditta* dentro vo significando".[1214] Indeed, Filippo Villani, a late-fourteenth-century commentator of Dante's *Comedy*, also interpreted Dante's inspiration in the same way. That is, "Non enim in somniis, sed per venam divini subsurrii, Spiritu revelante et aperiente os poete, divinum hoc opus prolatum est."[1215] If Petrarch does not depend on Dante for this inspiration, their common origin is, however, betrayed in the same use of the technical term, *dictare*, commonly used in the Middle Ages for literary composition. That is, for Petrarch the Holy Ghost is "dictans" and Dante's Amor (also called 'divina potestate,/ la somma sapienza e il primo amore')[1216] "ditta dentro". In other words, Petrarch would seem to be stating, in the *Familiaris* X 5 to Gherardo, that his own literary production is guided and perhaps even dictated by the Holy Ghost, in other words, that *flatus poeticus* is the same as the pneumatic power of the *Spiritus Sanctus*. To my knowledge, no other poet or

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[1213] *Act.*, 2, 1-4.
[1214] *Purg.*, 24, 52-54. Cf. also *Mon.*, III iv 11, p.237.
[1215] Filippo Villani *Comm. If.* I 1-3.
[1216] *If.*, 3, 5-6.

writer before or after Dante had ever dared state as much. Where divine inspiration was claimed, at least in Cavalcanti, Cino da Pistoia and Dante, it was *Amor* providing the inspiration, never the third Person of the Trinity, even though this might be easily presumed. Petrarch would seem to consider himself, therefore, at least from the point of view of his inspiration, the most daring and, probably, the greatest exponent of this stilnovistic school of thought.

To be "repleti Spiritu Sancto" also means, as the Scriptures explicitly reveal, to be able to heal.[1217] Analogously, those following the "third way" described by Petrarch can also heal, provided they recognize the source of such healing. The 'healers' of the third way can heal both body and mind. The healing power of the third way includes, as we can glean from the context, poets. Such poets, however, constitute a "rarum genus" and like "to keep to the shadows".[1218] In the chapter on the *De otio*, I discussed the possibility that this part of the *Familiaris* X 5 might allude to Lucretius. Even if it were only a general statement concerning himself and few others, the statement would still be of importance in the context of divinely inspired literary production. As far as Horace and a centuries-old tradition concerning poetry are concerned, an integral part of poetry is that it should be *utilis*, that is, that it should help man. If the model to which Petrarch is prescribing is that of the Apostles "repleti Spiritu Sancto", then the healing consists is going out into the world to proselytise, in other words, pilgrimage. Via inspiration of the Holy Ghost, perhaps Petrarch thought that such poetry could also 'heal' Gherardo of his present cloistered situation.

The Holy Ghost, however, as I pointed out above, is also alluded to in the *Familiaris* IV 1.[1219] Once Petrarch reaches the "Filiolus", that is, the summit of Mt

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[1217] *Act.*, 3, 1-10; 28, 7-10.
[1218] *Fam.*, X 5 10-12.
[1219] See p. 158.

Ventoux and the height of contemplation, he is "deeply moved" (*permotus*) by a "spiritus quidam aeris insolitus".[1220] Seeing that in the same context there are quite transparent allusions to the first two members of the Trinity, namely "Altissimus", the Father, and "Filiolus", the Son, the "spiritus" must be the Holy Ghost. Indeed, this "certain unusual breath of air" opens up Petrarch's vision. With the clouds "sub pedibus", he can now fully "respicere". Indeed, it is here for first time that he sees the "partes italicae, quo magis inclinat animus" with all the anagogical significance we have seen attached to such inclination.[1221]

To conclude the discussion of the *Familiaris* X 5, it would seem that Petrarch sees his own life choice, his "appetitus boni" or "humana curiositas", as fully in line with an uplifting, anagogical striving to reach God. Gherardo, on the other hand, has given up composing verse and drawing conclusions of his own via *callidae iuncturae*, and has, consequently, abandoned the intellectual-spiritual aspect of the climb up to the summit. In other words, whereas Petrarch has now learnt from the climb and can, perhaps, fully heed the words of the shepherd (Virgil?, St Augustine?), on the intellectual-spiritual level Gherardo has remained the same scoffing youth for whom the shepherd had only been "raving on". Just as the basic difference between the two brothers is a question of free will and *not* of some sudden divine whim, Petrarch peremptorily invites Gherardo to open up his heart, to allow himself to be inspired by the Holy Ghost, and to say something original, not only for his own benefit, but also for that of others. *This* is the Petrarchan way of climbing up to Sion.

If Fracassetti is right in his calculations, the letter itself was written on Monday 11 June, 1352. This date coincides with the feast day of St Barnabas the Apostle, the day after the second Sunday of Pentecost. The letter falls, therefore, in

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[1220] *Fam.*, IV 1, 17.

the period in the liturgical year commemorating the 'speaking in tongues', that is, the *eloquium* infused into the Apostles by the Holy Ghost. Indeed, the Roman (ie. Franciscan) *Breviarium* for 11 June, which Petrarch and Gherardo would also have respectively read and heard repeatedly all day long in the various *lectiones*,[1222] paraphrases the quotes I made above[1223] taken from the New Testament, that is, "Ecce ego mitto vos sicut oves in medio luporum [...]"; "Discipuli quoque replebantur gaudio et Spiritu Sancto"; "Non enim vos estis qui loquimini; sed Spiritus Patris vestri, qui loquitur in vobis"; "Repleti quidem Spiritu Sancto, loquebantur cum fiducia verbum Dei", etc. In this light, should we also imagine that Petrarch, the new messenger or 'apostle' of Christ, has been moved by the same pneumatic *eloquium* to write this letter to Gherardo and, perhaps, to posterity? Seeing that St Barnabas is also the patron saint of Milan, where he is always depicted with a copy of St Matthew's Gospel in his hands, and seeing that Petrarch might also have used the authority of St Ambrose for his substitution of "vestri" with "mei", should we also think that Petrarch was, perhaps, somehow already thinking of his move to Milan and his definitive move away from Gherardo and Provence?

To sum up these first three letters addressed to Gherardo, it seems that the overall aim of Petrarch can be best described by the key terms espoused in the same letters. That is, the triad of letters is, first of all, in the *Familiaris* X 3, a *compellatio* meant to urge Gherardo to action, where Petrarch even directly introduces Christ, via the *disceptatio*, so as to remind Gherardo that he has a duty to God for the divine *munus* bestowed on him. Secondly, the *Familiaris* X 4 is an unabashed introduction to Petrarch's concept of the *reductio ad unum* of Christian and non-

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[1221] *Fam.*, IV 1, 18.

[1222] It would seem that the Carthusians adopted the Roman Breviary until 1587 when they introduced their own. See King, 1955, p.19.

Christian thought, where Petrarch, inspired by the Apollonian, that is, poetic Christ, seeks to tell Gherardo that he has been deceived by western monasticism. It is here that Petrarch tries to sail back up the river of eloquence in order to find the common source of Davidic and Apollonian verse. This common source can only be Christ himself. In the third place, the *Familiaris* X 5 is a veiled invitation for Gherardo to re-appraise his own vows and open himself up to truly divine inspiration via the Horatian *callida iunctura*. We are implicitly led to infer that Petrarch has always drawn on such inspiration himself for his own literary production.

In the next three letters to be analysed, Petrarch carries on in his bid to substitute the meagre tutor and instruments of learning which the Carthusian Order has placed at Gherardo's disposal. We shall see that the culminating moment in the *accessus ad auctorem*, reached in the *Familiaris* XVIII 5, will be the most analytical and, perhaps, also the most humanly poignant in the relationship between the two brothers.

The *Familiaris* XVI 2 *Ad Gerardum germanum suum, monachum cartusiensem, exhortatio*. (2 Nov. 1352 or 1353).[1224]

In the spring of 1348 Petrarch is invited to supper by the Bishop of Padua, Ildebrandino de' Conti. The Paduan bishop is paid an unexpected visit by two Carthusian monks sent to found a new Charterhouse near Treviso. Petrarch thus gives us a brief yet efficacious idea of the great expansion of the Carthusian Order throughout Italy in his lifetime.[1225] Having been asked to dinner, these two monks

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[1223] See p. 319-320, nn. 1207-1208.

[1224] For the dating of this letter, see Wilkins, 1955, pp.150-151.

[1225] Founded near Grenoble in 1084 by St Bruno of Cologne, the Carthusian Order spread rapidly all over Europe with the foundation of a total of 282 charterhouses of which, 37 in the 12th century, 34 in the 13th century, 110 in the 14th century alone(!), and a drop again in the 15th century with the foundation of 'only' another 45 *domus cartusiae*. Examples of major fourteenth-century foundations of charterhouses in Italy are: Naples (1325), Bologna (1334), Florence, Pisa (1367), Rome (1370) and Pavia (1396). Cf. King, 1955, p.6.

inform a moved Petrarch that there had been thirty-four deaths in Montrieux.[1226] This death toll probably refers to both religious members *stricto sensu,* and servants and métayers seeing that the *Annales Cartusienses* only mention twenty deaths in Montrieux.[1227] Such an exceptional mortality had deemed it necessary for the General Chapter to decide that thirty divine services be celebrated in every house of the Order for those of Montrieux who had died *sine divinis*.[1228] The *Familiaris* in question, which was presumably written to glorify Gherardo, was intended to move a vast reading public. It contains "un des plus beaux épisodes de la vie monastique au moyen âge."[1229] Gherardo, perhaps due to his "robur corporis solidum" (reminiscent of his "stili robur" of *Fam.*, X 5, 22) and "valitudo optima", most befitting of those holy men who build bodily virtues,[1230] was the only one in Montrieux allegedly spared by the plague. The two Carthusian guests in Padua tell Petrarch that Gherardo had assisted his dying brethren by writing down their last words and giving them their last kisses. Gherardo had also washed their bodies only to carry them on his own shoulders to bury them in the graves he himself had dug for them. Once all his brethren had died, Gherardo had then remained alone like a dog to protect the monastery from looters, but was rewarded by being helped in this task by Christ. Gherardo was then honoured by the prior of the Great Charterhouse and eighty-three foreign priors with the privilege of choosing a prior and some monks from other convents to re-populate Montrieux. It is here that Petrarch practically hails Gherardo as the second founder, or better, *reformator*, of the *monasterium Montis Rivi*.[1231]

[1226] *Fam.*, XVI 2, 5.
[1227] Cochin, 1975, p.77.
[1228] *Ann. Ord. Cart.*, cit. in Cochin, 1975, p.80.
[1229] Cochin, 1975, p.78.
[1230] *Fam.*, XVI 5, 9. This is obviously a Christianized version of the classical adage, "Mens sana in corpore sano".
[1231] *Fam.*, XVI 2, 8, "quibus desertum morte tuorum monasterium reformares".

The aim of the letter would seem, at face value, to praise Gherardo. There are also, however, several concealed issues. First of all, in the chapter on Mary Magdalene, and again in the analysis above of the *Familiaris* XVI 9, the *commendatio* of Montrieux to Zanobi, I suggested that one of the reasons why Petrarch objected to Gherardo's position in Montrieux was that the second *reformatio* or founding of the charterhouse did not reflect the first founding. That is, Gherardo, *reformator*, did not heed the lesson of Mary Magdalene, *reformata*. I also pointed out the probability that the *Familiaris* XVI 9 is a purely literary construction never actually even sent to Naples. In other words, Montrieux was and remained a *direptum tugurium Christi*.

In the second place, the official version of this re-founding presents a slightly different version. The *Annales Ordinis Cartusiensis* for the year 1348 record Petrarch's importance as a cultural commentator, and even quote him (badly), and yet there is no mention whatsoever of his brother who, presumably, would also have given lustre to the Carthusian Order. The *Annales* read;

> Annum, inquit, millesimum trecentesimum quadragesimum octavum lugeo, qui non solum nos amicis, sed mundum omnem gentibus spoliavit[...].[1232]

The *Annales* are a nineteenth-century compilation of the historical documents which had survived the various fires, wars and catastrophes which had befallen the Order. In the same context, however, they quote the *Charta Capituli Generalis*, which is a document contemporary to the events described. This *Charta* does not mention Gherardo either. It reads;

> Pro omnibus, ait Charta anni 1348, defunctis Domus Montis Rivi, qui sunt viginti, conceditur tricenarium per omnes Domos Ordinis, pro eo quod non habuerunt divinum officium, sed sicut moriebantur, sepeliebantur; item pro aliis

[1232] *Ann. Ord. Cart.*, Vol. 5, pp.473-474. Quote from *Fam.*, VIII 7, 11-12.

> personis Ordinis hoc anno mortuis in quorum obitu non potuit expleri debitum officium Ordinis et persolvi.

Although it could be argued that the Carthusian Order might not have wanted to exalt a lowly monk and, therefore, foster personal vanity in its fold, it is, nevertheless, a strident contradiction that the two versions of the re-founding of Montrieux should be so different.

In the third place, as I have demonstrated elsewhere,[1233] the fact that Ildebrandino de' Conti is going to die shortly afterwards ("nunc novum celo sidus accessit"[1234]), and that the two Carthusian priors remain anonymous, is probably part of a specific narrative technique on Petrarch's part concerning the ordering and re-writing of the *Rerum familiarium libri* as a literary composition. Logic would have it that it was possible that Gherardo knew at least one of the two priors by name, the "prior transalpinus", and would have been happy to receive a letter from his brother to hear that this Carthusian brother had spoken so highly about him. It would seem that Petrarch uses dead men, such as Ildebrandino de' Conti here, and Dionigi da Borgo Sepolcro in the *Familiaris* IV 1, or those destined to remain anonymous, such as these Carthusian priors here, or Petrarch's 'divinely eloquent' servant in the *Familiaris* XV 3, as part of a specific narrative technique to cover his autobiographical tracks.

In the fourth place, the fact that Petrarch claims to have remained silent raises further suspicion. In fact, it is not Petrarch who asks about Gherardo, which, otherwise, would have seemed most natural among siblings who had not seen other for years, especially after the 1348 plague. It is, rather, Ildebrandino, whose life is "exemplaris" and whose "doctrina et oratio " are "sancte",[1235] who first asks about

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[1233] Lokaj 2000.
[1234] *Fam.*, XVI 2, 1.
[1235] *Fam.*, XVI 2, 3.

Gherardo. Petrarch writes that Ildebrandino, "verbum e verbo eliciens et inter alia tui quoque mentionem faciens, quam sorte ac vocatione tua contentus ageres quesivisset".[1236] This question supposedly occasioned "magnifici rumores" in the two Carthusian priors. The indirect interrogative, however, is the clue to the passage. Whether Gherardo was really "contentus" (in the meaning of 'satisfied' or 'vehement') about his lot and his vocation is the underlying doubt in Petrarch's previous letter to his brother, the *Familiaris* X 5, concerning, *inter alia*, the possible fickleness of Gherardo's "vota" (vows). Indeed, the indirect nature of the question itself, though ostensibly open, does raise the question as to how happy Gherardo really was in the cloister.

This doubt is, perhaps, also at the basis of the *exhortatio* which, though anticipated in the title of the letter, only appears at the very end. Petrarch has been embraced by Ildebrandino and the two priors because they have seen a certain resemblance between him and his younger brother, Gherardo, the hero and *reformator* of Montrieux. At this point, Petrarch finishes the letter by writing, "Tu vale et, propter quod hec omnia scripta sunt, fac, obsecro, mi frater, ut qualem cepisti talem te prestes in finem".[1237] What Gherardo "has begun to be", in the moving description in the letter, is a heroic person capable of making courageous decisions. Indeed, it is one particular decision which Petrarch, perhaps, praises most, the decision which triggered off the rest: the decision to disobey his prior. Petrarch writes:

> Cum pestis hec que omnes terras ac maria pervagata est, ad vos ex ordine venisset et castra in quibus Cristo militas, invasisset, priorque tuus, vir alioquin, ut ipse novi, sancti ardentisque propositi, tamen inopino malo territus, hortaretur fugam, te illi cristiane simul ac philosophice respondisse placere consilium modo inaccessibilis morti locus aliquis usquam esset; et cum ille nichilominus abeundum diceret,

[1236] *ibid.*
[1237] *Fam.*, XVI 2, 10.

> respondisse acrius iret quo se dignum crederet, te in custodia tibi a Cristo credita permansurum; cumque iterum et iterum instaret et inter terrores alios sepulcrum quoque tibi defuturum minaretur, dixisse te illam tibi ex omnibus ultimam curam esse, neque enim tua interesse sed superstitum quali iaceas sepultura; illum postremo cessisse ad penates patrios nec ita multo post morte illuc eum insequente subtractum, te vero incolumen, Eo apud quem est fons vite protegente, mansisse.[1238]

Disobedience to one's prior, especially by a lowly *clericus redditus*, even in such dire circumstances, is simply not credible. This fact adds to the literary nature of the episode. Though shrouded by literary fiction, the episode in itself does, however, provide a valuable lesson for Gherardo (or Petrarch's reading public). The prior is normally of good, devout will. When seized by terror, however, he is no longer capable of reasoning through the situation. He, therefore, invites everybody, Gherardo included, to abandon Montrieux and escape. Gherardo, on the other hand, is obviously thinking more clearly. Gherardo reverently asks where there might be a place which the plague could not reach. This, for Petrarch, is a "Christian and philosophical reply" to the situation. That is, Gherardo had reasoned as both a Christian and a philosopher, presumably drawing upon the few lessons which his elder brother had imparted. It is this new equilibrium between Christian behaviour and philosophical reasoning that now urges Gherardo to individual, courageous action. The fact that the terrified prior would be found dead soon afterwards and Gherardo was to be saved by Christ indicates, according to Petrarch, that Gherardo's decision was right. In other words, Christ approved not only of this new equilibrium, but also of Gherardo's disobedience to his superiors. When, in the *exhortatio*, Petrarch beseeches his brother to "continue being what he has begun to be", Petrarch is, in other words, inviting Gherardo to continue applying his new

[1238] *Fam.*, XVI 2, 4-5.

philosophical culture to his own position within the cloister. Along the lines of his Lucretian-style exhortation in the *De otio*, now Petrarch exhorts Gherardo to continue questioning the validity and logic of the established order.

The *Familiaris* XVII 1 *Ad Gerardum Cartusiensem monachum, quenam vera philosophia, quenam vera lex, quis ambarum optimus magister*. (1353)

Not only has Gherardo demonstrated a real, life-challenging application of philosophy in the dramatic plague-stricken 1348, but, through the *Familiaris* XVII 1, we find out that Gherardo has also written about philosophy. Petrarch continues in his use of a 'monastic style' of language with a reference to a monastic refectory when he states that, thanks to the contents of Gherardo's letter, his "animus cibis suis suaviterque *refectus* est".[1239] Petrarch has noticed a huge improvement in Gherardo's capability, not only in the steadfastness of his holy decisions, but mainly because of the "insperata et inopina hec copia literarum". An obvious contrast is made with the aforementioned "librorum bona copia"[1240] which Montrieux, as I argued, did not hold. Indeed, Gherardo's letter is so unexpectedly long that Petrarch calls it a "libellus".[1241] Seeing that Gherardo entered the Carthusian Order "neglectful of letters, almost naked",[1242] and seeing that his Carthusian tutor has taught him how to negate what he had learnt at university, his advancement must be due to Petrarch's teaching and direction.

In this realisation, Petrarch also allows his anger at the Carthusian Order to emerge. We can see this rather clearly in the polemic against the Carthusian preceptor developed throughout the letter, which I shall confront below. We can

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[1239] *Fam.*, XVII 1, 1.
[1240] *Fam.*, XVI 9, 16.
[1241] The term *libellus* was commonly used also for ordinary letters, together with its near synonyms, *epistola*, *tractatus* and even *nuntius*. Cf. Constable, 1976, pp. 11, 13, 25, 32 & 53.
[1242] *Fam.*, XVII 1, 2.

also see it in the almost sarcastic dative, "Deo" in the definition of the Carthusian Order as "religio illa Deo gratissima".[1243] That is, throughout the letter we shall see the constant aversion Petrarch has concerning the Carthusian Order. And yet he states that this Order is "most pleasing to God". Indeed, as we saw in the last letter, in which Petrarch exhorted his brother to continue using philosophy to challenge the validity and logic of the institutionalised faith, here we see that it is exactly the same effort taken to write the *libellus* to Petrarch that has allowed Christ "to transform Gherardo from "indoctus" to "doctus" and from "naufragus" to "salvus".[1244] As we have seen in the *De otio* and right throughout this subgroup of *Familiares*, Petrarch has always described himself as the sailor on a stormy sea, whereas Gherardo was safe (*salvus*) behind the mighty walls of the port of monasticism. Just as in the last letter we saw that Petrarch revealed the purely literary nature of his wonder at being born of the same womb, we discover that all along he has thought that Gherardo, and not he, has been floundering. Obviously the effort put in to his own *callida iunctura*, which has opened Gherardo up to the inspiration of the Holy Ghost or Christ, has truly begun to heal and save him. It is in this sense that Petrarch quotes Cicero's noteworthy line, "philosophia non verborum ars est sed vite".[1245] Indeed, this is the meaning of the line, taken from this letter and quoted by me at the beginning of the analysis of this subgroup, that is, "Quamvis enim in literis non sit salus, est tamen fuitque iam multis ad salutem via".[1246] In other words, Gherardo has begun to allow himself to be saved from the clutches of *Cartusia* by applying himself to philosophy and the "tertia via". He has answered to the call, the *compellatio*, and has opened up his cell door to Petrarch who has become his *preceptor*, his messenger/apostle of Christ.

[1243] *ibid.*
[1244] *Fam.*, XVII 1, 4, "[*scil.* Christ] de naufrago salvum fecit".
[1245] *Fam.*, XVII 1, 10.

Petrarch tells his brother that to philosophize is not enough. Philosophy in a very broad sense is practised by " a thousand different men in any one city" who seek to gain fame and fortune from it. Philosophy, therefore, has been turned into a prostitute.[1247] Petrarch's concept of and high regard for philosophy is analogous, therefore, to the concept espoused in the *Convivio* by Dante who refers to a large number of philosophers "per accidente",[1248] the so-called "cattivi d'Italia", among whom we may find noble men and women, barons and knights, who are "pronti ad avarizia" and who have transformed the dignity of philosophical endeavour into a meretrix.[1249]

Gherardo, however, even though it has taken him ten years to do it, has learnt not only about "true philosophy" but also about the "true law".[1250] Petrarch, the self-appointed tutor, asks his brother whether he wants to know what real philosophy really is and how he can reach it more quickly. This implies, of course, that the process of Gherardo's acquisition of *sapientia* must go on.

At this point, the rest of the letter is developed as a small-scale imitation of Cicero's *De re publica* and *De legibus*. That is, Petrarch writes a mini *tractatus de philosophia* and *de legibus*. In the *tractatus de philosophia*, Petrarch develops the line of thought he had introduced in the *Familiaris* X 4 on both the substantial equality in inspiration between Christian letters and non-Christian letters and the 'natural' tendency in all men to want to know and worship God. In this light, it becomes absolutely acceptable for Christians to study pre-Christian thought. Petrarch, in his *compellatio* in the *Familiaris* X 3, had already urged Gherardo to lend his ears to those authors whom Ambrose, Augustine and Jerome thought

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[1246] *Fam.*, XVII 1, 3.
[1247] *Fam.*, XVIII 1, 7.
[1248] *Cv.*, 3, 11, 9.
[1249] *Cv.*, 1, 9, 2; cf. *Cv.*, 3, 11, 10.
[1250] *Fam.*, XVII 1, 7.

worthy of their eyes.[1251] Indeed, he reminds Gherardo that it is not him saying this on his own, but Augustine in *De civitate Dei* who says, for example, that Plato, among all the ancient philosophers, drew the closest to the "true faith", stated that "to philosophize is to love God", that "the philosopher is the lover of God", and that "philosophia ad beatam vitam tendit".[1252] Petrarch then uses Augustine's Latin translation of the Greek term "philosophia" to remind Gherardo that philosophy is really "amor sapientie",[1253] where *Sapientia*, as we have also seen above, is Christ.[1254] It follows that the most Christian of life choices is that of the philosopher: "ex ipsis etiam Augustini verbis sine dubietate concluditur verum philosophum nisi Dei amatorem verumque cristicolam esse non posse".[1255]

To conclude his mini *tractatus de philosophia*, Petrarch quotes Paul *Col* 2, 8: "Cavete ne quis vos decipiat per philosophiam et inanem seductionem secundum elementa mundi". A comparison with the *Vulgate*, however, soon reveals that there is a significant discrepancy between the two texts. Petrarch has introduced "seductionem" in the place of "fallaciam secundum traditionem hominum". The manuscript tradition containing "seductionem" rather than "traditionem hominum" is long and authorized by several leading figures of the Latin Church, including Tertullian,[1256] Ambrose,[1257] Jerome,[1258] Augustine[1259] and others. Indeed, seeing that Petrarch is authorised in his choice of "seductionem" rather than "traditionem hominum", the choice itself becomes operative in the wider context. The context in *Colossians* is entitled *Apostoli sollicitudo et praemonitio contra falsos doctores*. These "false doctors" have taught the Colossians and the Laodiceans a false

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[1251] *Fam.*, X 3, 7.
[1252] *Fam.*, XVII 1, 12-15. cf Aug., *civ.*, 8, 8.
[1253] *Fam.*, XVII 1, 15.
[1254] *Fam.*, XVII 1, 17; 19-20. See p. 48, n. 167.
[1255] *Fam.*, XVII 1, 20.
[1256] *de praescr.*, 7; *cont. Marc.*, 5.
[1257] *de Abr.*, 2, 8 col.336; *in Ps.*, 118 col.1249.
[1258] *in Os.*, 12, col.1318.

philosophy and vain deceit according to the tradition of men and the rudiments of the world, and not according to Christ. My hypothesis is that the falseness of such doctrines refers again to the Carthusian Order. In the first place, the *traditio hominum* could well allude to monastic tradition which indeed seduces. In the second place, the greater context of the Pauline letter specifically alludes to the Laodiceans to whom Petrarch alludes in the explicit of the *De otio religioso*. I pointed out in the chapter above on the *De otio* that the quote from the *Apocalypse*[1260] concerning the need for good eye-ointment in order to see more clearly, refers to the members of the church of Laodicea, who were neither cold nor hot, but only lukewarm. In the greater context of John's reasoning, I also concluded that Petrarch's implicit message was that the Laodiceans and, therefore, the Carthusians, would be spat out of the mouth of God no longer to be part of the mystical body of Christ. In the third place, Petrarch has chosen a passage which specifically deals with deception (ne quis vos *decipiat*). Might this not refer back to the *Familiaris* X 4 in which Petrarch explicitly describes Gherardo as "deceptus"?[1261] Seeing that in the context of the *Familiaris* X 4 Petrarch explicitly states that "other orders" habitually deceive potential novices, might this Pauline passage also comfort my hypothesis that the sarcastic use of the adverb "certe" and the proximity of Gherardo's own deception implicitly denounce the Carthusian Order for deception as well? In this light, might not the substitution of "fallaciam secundum traditionem hominum" with "seductionem" implicitly indicate a working against Christ and, therefore, the workings of the Devil, the "seductor et antichristus" *par excellence*?[1262]

[1259] *conf.*, 3; *epist.*, 149; *civ.*, 10,7.
[1260] *De otio*, p.808; *Apoc.*, 3, 18 "collyrio inunge oculos tuos ut videas", cit. here on p. 100, nn.407-408.
[1261] *Fam.*, X 4, 28.
[1262] *Io., Ep.*, 2, 7.

Despite Petrarch's continual denunciation of *Cartusia*, the fact that Gherardo has seriously begun working on his philosophical *iuncturae* and that, consequently, he is really becoming the "cristicola" he had vowed he would become upon entering monasticism, occasions a turn around in Petrarch's consideration of Gherardo's position. In the *Familiares* analysed above, we saw that both Montrieux and Vaucluse constituted a *medietas* between Provence and Italy, that is, between Babylon and Jerusalem.[1263] Both Montrieux and Vaucluse were described with similar language and topographical features, such as the cave, the river and the woods. Only Vaucluse, however, was hailed by Petrarch as being the new "patria" of the classical tradition, where he could walk accompanied by the great thinkers of classical Athens and Rome. Now, Gherardo's action has changed this opinion. Petrarch writes, "Hanc tu ergo philosophiam, germane optime, non Athenis aut Rome, non Parisius, sed devoto in monte ac religioso in nemore feliciter apprehendisti".[1264] The topography remains the same, especially in the reference to the mountain and the woods, but now Gherardo's new doctrine is comparable to Athens, Rome and Paris. We might say that almost despite the Carthusian cloister, Gherardo is now becoming more and more like his elder brother, the uncloistered humanist who, as in sonnets 35 and 209, roams through the sweet hills and solitary woods in search of philosophy.

In the ensuing *tractatus de legibus*, Petrarch follows the same line of thought as he did above concerning philosophy. That is, just as Plato expressed 'Christian' thoughts in philosophy, so too did Cicero concerning law. Petrarch refers to Cicero's *De re publica*,[1265] in which he finds and reports a long passage about the common source of all law, the "comunis quasi magister et imperator omnium

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[1263] See pp. 185, 243, 295.
[1264] *Fam.*, XVII 1, 21.
[1265] Cic., *rep.*, 3, 33.

Deus". This passage was transmitted by Lactantius in whose *Divinae Institutiones* Petrarch finds the comment;

> suscipienda igitur dei lex est, quae nos ad hoc iter dirigat, illa sancta, illa caelestis, quam Marcus Tullius in libro de re publica tertio paene divina voce depinxit; cuius ego, ne plura dicerem, verba subieci.[1266]

Petrarch then paraphrases Lactantius's "paene divina voce" with "sine dubio – in hoc enim a Lactantio non discordo – divino aliquo spiritu instigatus [*scil.* Cicero] fecisse credendus est".[1267] That is to say, Cicero must have been inspired by the Holy Ghost. Indeed, just as Augustine authorises the study of Plato, now Lactantius authorises the study of Cicero. Indeed, for certain essential topics in Christian matters, Petrarch had already stated in the *Familiaris* X 5 that he considers Cicero an even greater authority than Christian thinkers.[1268] Though perhaps blasphemous at face value, when seen on the cosmic level of the truly eternal existence of 'Christian' philosophy and law, this assertion takes on a deeply Christian, orthodox sense.

This preference for Cicero in points of law, just as for Plato in certain points of philosophy, does not mean in any way that Petrarch prefers these pre-Christian thinkers to Christian ones, for even here it is a question of source. The tutor *par excellence* for such topics is Christ, so it is to Christ that Gherardo should look in order to advance in his acquisition of wisdom. All other philosophers, judges and learned men, both classical and Christian, are nothing compared to the Rock, which is Christ. Indeed, Petrarch ends the letter with a quote from *Psalm* 140,6 which he presents in the form of both the *Vulgate* and the *Vetus Latina*, with the comment by

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[1266] Lact., *inst*, 6, 8, 6-9. The variants between Cicero's text, as it is in Lactantius, and Petrarch's quote, consists in '*a*brogari' – '*o*brogari'; and '*s*ator' – '*l*ator'.

[1267] *Fam.*, XVII 1, 32.

[1268] *Fam.*, X 5, 18, "En studia vere contraria, en penitus vota pugnantia, non solum quia necessario hanc illa consequitur, sed etiam quia, ut ait Cicero, cui nescio quomodo in hac re prope plusquam

St Augustine contained in the *Enarrationes in Psalmos*. The significance of the verse, "Absorpti sunt iuncti petre iudices eorum", fully demonstrates the orthodox stance in Petrarch. This is probably why he uses the same quote just before his final conclusion in the *De otio*.[1269] Indeed, if my hypothesis regarding the use of Lucretius is correct, then he certainly would have needed to state his belief in the absolute superiority of Christ as clearly as possible so as not to be falsely accused of blasphemy.[1270]

Indeed, it is not like Petrarch, as he himself states, to quote so copiously from others, whether these be King David, Augustine or even the classics.[1271] This, however, is also a part of his teaching method. In stating this he confirms two points which he had already written in the *Familiares* analysed above. In the first place, he paraphrases the concept of *iunctura* and, therefore, strengthens Gherardo's grasp on it.[1272] He writes, "ut a doctis viris accepimus, quicquid ab ullo bene dictum est nostrum sit vel utendo certe nostrum fieri possit; est enim ut rerum sic verborum usucapio". The use of the legal term *usucapio*, normally found in issues regarding the possession of land and buildings, rather than the more technical and difficult term *iunctura* used specifically for rhetoric, would very probably have been more efficacious in teaching or reiterating to Gherardo the semantic substance of this technique which Petrarch, as we have seen, finds fundamental in the transmission and development of culture and wisdom. In the second place, Petrarch has also remained faithful to the decision he had expressed in the very first letter written to Gherardo, that is, to write in a style foreign to his own and closer to that of his

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catholicis testibus apud me fidei est, hec nostra que dicitur vita, mors est".

[1269] *De otio*, p.806.

[1270] For the ancient writers who disappear when compared to Christ the rock, see *De ign.* p.1046.

[1271] *Fam.*, XVII 1, 44, "Multa quidem hodie, ut vides, de alieno supra morem meum interserui".

[1272] See pp. 318, nn. 1202-1203; 323; 332.

audience, that is, in a more 'monastic' style.[1273] He, therefore, quotes much more extensively from St Augustine, Saint Athanasius, the Psalms and Paul than he does from Cicero. The effect of this consistency in teaching method is to transmit his convictions more efficaciously to an audience used to the language of certain texts and not others. Indeed, Petrarch adds, "feci autem ut plus fidei dictis meis esset apud te, tantorum hominum testimonio probatis".[1274]

To conclude, Petrarch is satisfied with Gherardo's progress. Like any satisfied tutor, he praises his pupil with "magnus plausus" and, for the first time in all the letters sent to him, with a particular eschatocollon, "decus meum".[1275] Gherardo, Petrarch's pride, is now ready to take on St Augustine's *Confessions*.

The *Familiaris* XVIII 5 *Ad Gerardum monachum Cartusiensem, sepe doctorum hominum libros incorrectiores esse quam reliquorum.*

This letter accompanies the copy of Augustine's *Confessions* which Petrarch had promised his brother. It represents, therefore, the closure of the circle which has brought Gherardo from the youth in the *Familiaris* IV, who 'reads' by lending his ears to the Word filtered through the voice of someone his superior, to the exegete now capable of independent thought and even disobedience to his superiors in order to heed more correctly the Word of the Lord. In sending Gherardo a copy of the *Confessions*, Petrarch has completed his *accessus ad auctorem* and his teaching. Indeed, this is the last time Petrarch will write to his brother in the entire span of time represented by the *Familiares*, that is, until the early thirteen-sixties some seven or eight years later.

[1273] *Fam.*, X 3, 59.
[1274] *Fam.*, XVII 1, 44.
[1275] *Fam.*, XVII 1, 45.

There is, however, a further lesson to be learnt. Petrarch relies on Gherardo (and/or his ideal reader) to realise that he has introduced a variation of the title into the body of the text. The variation is, "sepe ut agros divitum, sic libros doctorum hominum incultiores esse quam reliquos".[1276] The simile established between fields to be tilled and books to be carefully read is classical in origin. It is very likely, in fact, that Petrarch was thinking of Seneca.[1277] Whatever the ultimate source, however, by using the unreliability of servants yet again as a trope, and by substituting "incultiores" with "incorrectiores", Petrarch invites Gherardo to till the fields of the page in the search for treasure. Indeed, the text of the *Confessions* sent to him was written by the young scribe who had accompanied Petrarch in his visit to Gherardo in Montrieux the year before in 1353. The text, however, had not even been corrected. There might be spelling mistakes and other errors. Therefore, Gherardo is to use his intellect so that his understanding of the text will not be impeded in any way.[1278]

The state of the manuscript is obviously due to a question of contingent factors, such as lack of time and energy on Petrarch's part. This same fact is used, however, by Petrarch as yet another teaching instrument. That is to say, Gherardo will really have to use his intellect on his own in Montrieux, where Petrarch knows no one and no other text will be able to help him, in order to fathom out what is right and what is not in the text. He will really have to look over the text time and time again in order to find its treasures.

One such treasure is the recondite contents of the myth of Byblis. Petrarch compares the tears shed by Byblis to those shed by Augustine at the moment of his

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[1276] *Fam.*, XVIII 5, 5.

[1277] Sen., *epist.*, 108, 29, "in eodem prato bos herbam quaerit, canis leporem, ciconia lacertam". See also Feo, 1988, p.73.

[1278] *Fam.*, XVIII 5, 7, "Neglectam tamen orthographiam potiusquam insignes defectus invenies; denique forte aliquid occurret quod intellectum exerceat, quod impediat nihil".

conversion, "Videbis, quod de Biblide habetur in fabulis, Augustinum nostrum in fontem devotissimarum lacrimarum esse conversum".[1279] In fact, in the *Familiaris* X 3, we already saw Petrarch's attempt to urge Gherardo to read "Augustine's *Confessions* even though they flow forth with tears".[1280] That fact that the myth of Byblis is a genuine *hapax* in the entire *corpus* of the *Familiares* suggests just how exceptionally important it is.[1281] The fact that it actually ends the very last letter insisting on the relationship between the two sons of ser Petracco invites Gherardo (and us) to reflect on the same relationship. The implicit comparison is established, in fact, between these two sons, on the one hand, and the two grandchildren of Apollo, Byblis and Caunus, on the other. Just as Petrarch has spent so much time writing and entire group of *Familiares* to his brother, in which the verbs *fateor* and *confiteor* (I confess) occur in various forms time and time again, the image evoked through the myth is that of the wax tablet on which Byblis writes to her brother, which is the *confessio* of her incestuous love for him. As Ovid describes so eloquently, Byblis begins and then stops in doubt. She continues writing only to then damn the same tablet and rub everything out: "incipit et dubitat, scribit damnatque tabellas".[1282] Is this the same image Petrarch wanted to communicate to his brother and posterity? Was Gherardo and posterity supposed to understand that Petrarch loved Gherardo so much that he was willing to take the risk of opening up his entire soul and committing it to the page, no matter what the price? Petrarch seems to be asking whether it 'est fas scribere ad fratrem'? Was there also, in Petrarch's mind, the possibility that the battle might be lost? As Caunus in the Ovidian myth repudiates his sister and then moves to and founds another city,

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[1279] *Fam.*, XVIII 5, 8 = Aug., *conf.*, 8, 12.

[1280] *Fam.*, X 3, 56, "Lege Gregorii dyalogum, Augustini soliloquia et scatentes lacrimis confessionum libros".

[1281] The same myth occurs in *De rem.*, 1, 69, 18 (*De gratis amoribus*); *Tr. Cup.*, 3, 76; *Afr.*, 6, 53; *Ecl.*, 10, 138, and perhaps in *RVF* 23, 114.

Gherardo had already left Petrarch's side and moved to and indeed 'refounded' *Cartusia*. What was pleasurable and imperative for Petrarch might be considered as a wicked crime by Gherardo and/or his superiors. Analogously Byblis herself says, "finge placere mihi: scelus esse videbitur illi".[1283]

On the very point of it possibly being a 'crime' to introduce "strepitus" into the cloister via Petrarch's 'lesson via letters', might this "scelus" be yet another negative hyperbole? That is to say, might it not allude to Petrarch's *pride* in having found the way towards a truly Christian humanism from outside the cloister? After all, how else could we interpret the similarity between the words of Ovid, "si pudor **ora** tenebit,/ **littera** celatos arcana **fatebitur ignes**"[1284] with all the other instances of "ignes"[1285] which Ovid uses to indicate the sinful amorous "furor"[1286] of his incestuous Byblis, and the **confession** which Petrarch makes with his "in his **literis** vere **ignitum eloquium**"?[1287] These and other issues, even of a more indiscreet nature, would be possible because they were very probably all considered as foreseeable by Petrarch himself. They must, however, remain as hypothetical issues, because this is the foundation of Petrarch's personal allusive intertextual system. In this system every quote by Petrarch is "celata" just as the intertextualized "ignes" in the "littera" by Byblis are "celati" or hidden, at least initially, from her brother. The allegory of the mythical *auctoritas* is either expressly declared or completely hidden.

Such is the case also for Boccaccio. In the *Filocolo*, Boccaccio uses the tearful journey of Byblis, who follows her dear brother, as a real possibility. When

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[1282] *met.*, 9, 523.
[1283] *met.*, 9, 506.
[1284] *met.*, 9, 514-515.
[1285] *met.*, 9, 457 (ignes), 465 (igne), 502 (ardor), 509 (flammae), 516 (ignes), 520 (ignem), 541 (furor igneus), 562 (ardor), 647 (ignem).
[1286] *met.*, 9, 512, 541, 583, 602.
[1287] *Fam.*, XVIII 5, 8. See also in the same paragraph, "**accensum** liber hic animum in**flamma**bit, qui algentes **accenderet**".

dealing more 'scientifically' with the same myth, however, he euhemeristically rationalises the Ovidian as a poetic "figmentum" (*Geneal.* IV 9):

> Ex quo factum est ut in fontem Nayadum beneficio misera verteretur, ut dicit Ovidius: Sic lacrimis consumpta suis Phebeia Biblis vertitur in fontem, qui nunc quoque vallibus illis Nomen habet domine, nigraque sub ilice manat etc. Figmentum autem satis patet, quia a fletu continuo fons lacrimis manans visa est.

Quite on the contrary, it is also possible that Petrarch's choice to conclude the sub-group of letters to and about Gherardo with the quote of this particular Ovidian myth of sibling incest is simply a question of allusivity between the name, Byblis, and the Greek term "byblion" meaning 'liber'. This 'liber' might, in turn, refer, in the first place, to that 'liber' of the *Confessiones* by St Augustine which we have seen throughout this sub-group of letters from the initial *Familiaris* IV 1 right up to the last letter, the *Familiaris* XVIII 5. It is with this last letter that Petrarch materially sends his brother a copy of the Book *par excellence* which, in the *Familiares*, is not the Bible, but St Augustine's *Confessions*. Indeed, the first letter, the *Familiaris* IV 1, which sets out the entire plan for the sub-group, as I briefly discussed above,[1288] is addressed to an ideal reader, Dionigi da Borgo Sansepolcro, "professor sacre pagine". That is, the ideal reader of the gerardine sub-group should be a bible scholar, a dedicated lover of the Biblia Sacra. In the second place, the writing and correcting carried out by Byblis of her own confessions (*confiteor*) sent to her brother (*met.* 9, 523-563) may somehow correspond to Petrarch's writing of the *Familiares*. In the third place, the positioning of the intertextual allusion to Byblis suggests an intimate rhetorical and hyperbolic connection between the "fons" of tears which flow from the eyes of Byblis, on the one hand, and the "flumina" of tears which burst out of the "oculi" of St Augustine in the cathartic

moment of his conversion, on the other.[1289] Indeed, both Byblis and St Augustine are lying on the ground, respectively under an ilex and a fig-tree.[1290] After a painful confession, both Byblis and St Augustine shed copious amounts of tears. Petrarch chooses to represent these same tears in the explicit of the meaningful *Familiaris* XVIII 5, 8 which, in turn, poignantly closes the gerardine cycle.

The gerardine cycle under the aegis of Byblis

I feel it important to insist on the Augustinian-confessional character not only of this last letter, but also of the entire gerardine area of Petrarch's re-elaboration of his life experience. I believe that the myth of Byblis is the real Leitmotiv implicit in every facet of Petrarch's relationship with his brother. As far as the culminating scene in Augustine's *Confessiones* is concerned, together with the "Canticum" of thanks in *Confessiones* 9, 1-2, I schematise the parallel in the following salient points:

1. *Fam.* IV 1, 31:- The quote of *Mt* 19, 21, which imposes the abandonment of material possessions in order to follow Christ, is on the same level as *Conf.* 8, 12, which is the "sors" drawn by Augustine (as it was for St Antony and as it will be for St Francis). It corresponds to Petrarch's own conversion. Petrarch's 'Augustinian' foresight brings him to date the *Fam.* X 5 in accordance with the *festum* of St Barbanas, 11 June, which places

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[1288] See pp. 141-143, 163.

[1289] *conf.*, 8, 12, l.

[1290] Cf. Ovid *met.*, 9, 649-651, "cum tu lassata sequendo/ concidis et dura positis tellure capillis,/ Bybli, iaces frondesque tuo premis ore caducas"; 655-656, "muta iacet viridesque suis tenet unguibus herbas/ Byblis, et umectat lacrimarum gramina rivo"; 663-665, "sic lacrimis consumpta suis Phoebeia Byblis/ vertitur in fontem, qui nunc quoque vallibus illis/ nomen habet dominae nigraque sub ilice manat" vs Aug., *conf.*, 8, 12, "ego sub quadam fici arbore stravi me nescio quomodo, et dimisi habenas lacrimis, et proruperunt flumina oculorum meorum".

him and Gherardo, should his brother follow him, in the fold of the Apostles (*Act.* 4, 37).

2. *Fam.* X 3, 56:- the "Lege [...] Augustini [...] scatentes lacrimis confessionum libros" is a calque of the prophetic "tolle et lege" of *Conf.* 8, 12, repeated by Petrarch in *Fam.* XVIII 5, 8 with "perlege et insiste".
3. *Fam.* XVIII 5, 8:- the quote of *Ps.* 119, already adopted by St Augustine in *Conf.* 9, 2, as a "canticum" of thanks for his own apostolic investiture deriving from his conversion, is a metaphor of the divine love which pierces the flesh of the lover of Christ.

This third point is better explained by Augustine himself:

> Quamquam tu nobis in convalle plorationis ascendentibus, et cantantibus Canticum graduum, "dederas sagittas acutas, et carbones vastatores, adversus linguam subdolam"[1291] velut consulendo contradicentem, et sicut cibum assolet, amando consumentem.

As Petrarch explains in the *De otio*,[1292] the "potens" is Christ, the arrows penetrating (and stigmatising?) the side of a lover of Christ are his "nuntii", and the hot embers left to burn there are the "exempla". If the "nuntii" of Christ are all those who have been inspired by the Holy Ghost, in other words, his Apostles, then the last words Petrarch imparts to his brother are consistent with the entire teaching programme underlying the sub-group of letters. That is to say, Petrarch's last invitation to Gherardo is not only to read Augustine's *Confessions*, but also Plato, Cicero,

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[1291] *Ps.*, 119, 3-4, "Quid detur tibi, aut quid apponatur tibi ad linguam dolosam?/ Sagittae potentis acutae cum carbonibus desolatoriis", significantly quoted in various forms in the explicit of both book one and book two of the *De otio*, pp.672; 682-684; 804-806. See also *Fam.*, XII 8 γ 3 and *Sine nom.*, V 1. In Petrarch's "et sancto igne desolabitur atque vastabitur" (*De otio*, pp.682-684), Augustine's "vastatores" is easily recognisable. "vastando" was also part of the *Glossa ordinaria* of St Augustine, easily accessible for Petrarch, which read, "Haec exempla vastando ad desolationem ducunt carnales cogitationes et saeculares amores, ut sit purus locus aedificio Dei".

[1292] *De otio*, p. 684.

Lactantius and a whole series of other 'inspired, apostolic' writers, including himself.

Time of composition of the *Familiares*: the eschatocolla:

In order to conclude the present discussion of the sub-group of letters written to and about Gherardo, I should like to consider the time in which Petrarch communicates that these letters were written. It would seem, in fact, that the time of composition, whether feigned or real, throws new light on the dichotomy between the two brothers. The time-factor would seem to be in line with the *medietas* of the geographical position of Montrieux and Vaucluse, which I have amply discussed above as an indication of the psychological and philosophical dichotomy between the two brothers.[1293] Except for the *Familiaris* X 3, which does not specify any particular hour, every single letter written to Gherardo was composed at, or at least prompted by, the onset of the evening. The eschatocollon of both *Familiaris* X 4 and XVIII 5 reads "ad vesperam"; the *Familiaris* X 5 bears an eschatocollon with "in solitudine" with no indication of time, but where the first sentence of the letter specifies that Petrarch had received Gherardo's letter and wooden box the day before "ad vesperam". The *Familiaris* XVI 2 bears no eschatocollon whatsoever, but Petrarch begins the letter describing the dinner party in Padua at the house of Ildebrandino de' Conti with "Cenabam forte" (I happened to be dining…). It was, therefore, in the evening. When a certain religious man delivers Gherardo's "libellus", Petrarch writes in the *Familiaris* XVII 1 that it was "pars diei ultima".

At a first glance, one might say that the concomitance of eventide and Petrarch's casting his thoughts to Gherardo might be entirely coincidental. Indeed, no one to my knowledge has ever taken into serious consideration the development

of the narrative function carried out by the eschatocolla in Petrarch's *Familiares*. The consideration becomes truly interesting, however, in the light of statistical comparison. Of the 350 letters in the *corpus*, only 24 bear eschatocolla indicating the time of day in which the individual letters were supposedly written. Of these, in only seven cases did Petrarch feel it important to specify that he was writing in the evening ("ad vesperam", "prima face", "diluculo" or "ambigua iam luce").[1294] One significant example is the *Familiaris* IV 4, that is, the letter in which Petrarch tells Cardinal Giovanni Colonna about the Parisian and Neapolitan invitations to be crowned with laurel. Another case is the *Familiaris* XV 13 in which Petrarch informs his dear Philippe de Cabassoles about the death of Ildebrandino de' Conti, bishop of Padua. Analogously, the *Familiares* XX 13 and XX 14 are addressed to Petrarch's Lelius in a bid to reconcile him with their other friend, Socrates. The letters at hand are, therefore, of no little importance. They deal, rather, with the paramount issues underlying the entire *corpus* of *Familiares*, that is, poetics and friendship. Furthermore, the time of the day at which Petrarch most often chose to write and indicate it as such was at, or just before, dawn. We can conclude, therefore, that evening writing is in itself significant. The fact that the Gerardine letters are characterised by such a *modus scribendi* means that the sub-group occupies a privileged position in Petrarch's rhetorical and structural strategies for the *Familiares*, not to mention in the very same psychology of the man himself.

The importance of such writing increases when we consider the related eschatocolla and *hapax*. For example, the syntagma "in solitudine" is a *hapax legomenon* in the entire *corpus* of the *Rerum familiarium libri*. It is also this very *hapax* which closes the first triad of letters sent to Gherardo (X 3, X 4, X 5). The

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[1293] See pp. 185, 244, 296, 337.

[1294] *Fam.*, IV 4, X 4, XV 13, XVIII 5, XX 13, XX 14. The *Fam.*, XXI 3 has "ambigua iam luce", but does not seem to be part of the same typology of letter.

myth of Byblis is another *hapax* which, in turn, closes the entire sub-group of Gerardine letters. Moreover, the syntagma "ad vesperam" is part of the eschatocollon in the second letter of the first triad addressed to Gherardo (*Fam.*, X 4). The same syntagma literally closes the sixth and last letter ever sent to Gherardo (*Fam.*, XVIII 5). The *Ventosa* had, however, already anticipated such *modus scribendi*. The two brothers had reached Malaucene "ad vesperam"[1295] and Petrarch had experienced his own private Augustinian conversion, from which he had excluded Gherardo, "just as the sun was setting and the shadow cast by Mt Ventoux was growing longer and longer".[1296]

The phenomenon of writing at eventide does not seem, therefore, to be dictated by chance. The problem remains in our understanding of it. Here I do not want to entertain any desire to psychoanalyse Petrarch at a distance of almost six hundred and fifty years in the light of any clues he himself did not leave. It is possible to conclude, however, that Gherardo does indeed enjoy a very special position in Petrarch's mind. Whether this is because Petrarch felt abandoned by his only living brother/ex friend, or betrayed/deluded by the only contemporary tradition (allegorically represented by Gherardo) supposedly meant to guarantee intellectual endeavour (ie. monasticism), remains open for debate. The fact is that Petrarch has allowed posterity to enter into this very special realm and realise that the first humanist would begin his meditation on Gherardo and monasticism at dusk, at the moment of the two lights, at twilight. In the very moment in which Gherardo in Montrieux was presumably about to draw in his breath "at vespers" to raise his voice (but *not* his intellect) to God, Petrarch implicitly and enigmatically paints the other half of the picture: Petrarch the humanist, poet and theologian in

[1295] *Fam.*, IV 1, 6, "Statuta die digressi domo, Malausanam venimus ad vesperam".
[1296] *Fam.*, IV 1, 24, "instare enim tempus abeundi, quod inclinaret sol et umbra montis excresceret".

Vaucluse takes up his pen "ad vesperam" to urge his brother's intellect onwards and upwards in its climb to the Son.

The Ventoux letter as an allusive 'fresco-cycle'

To summarise my efforts at identifying Petrarch's narrative technique, it is obvious that the *Rerum Familiarium Libri* is no simple collection of letters. A systemic programme or *intentio* can be traced in the constant use of the dead and unnamed to cover his narrative tracks, in the development of implicit comparison and the unspoken, in the almost tongue-in-cheek employment of negative hyperboles and digression, and in the superior role of "fate". The whole sub-group studied is governed by an inherent, almost Manichaean, dichotomy which can be represented as: Provence – Italy, Montrieux - Vaucluse and, therefore, Gherardo – Petrarch. The only point of contact in such a rigid dichotomy is at twilight, the only moment when opposites can truly meet, no matter how fleetingly. Furthermore, Petrarch confers cohesion to the entire Gerardine sub-group by ordering the individual letters into sets based on the number three, by almost surreptitiously using meaningful eschatocolla and by anticipating the contents in the "fresco cycle" contained in the Mt Ventoux letter in the guise of a photographic negative. This allusive "fresco cycle" can be summarised as follows:

1. The choice of Gherardo as perfect companion/ importance of *amicitia* and *concordia* → cf. *Fam.* IX 2 on *germanitas* and *amicitia* disqualifying Gherardo as both brother and friend; *Fam.*, X 5 *de discordia.*
2. Meeting with old shepherd; brothers part ways, Gherardo upwards, Petrarch sideways → the two brothers climb up to the Lord differently, Gherardo in Montrieux, Petrarch through *amor* and *studium* in Vaucluse.

3. Petrarch catches up with a sleeping Gherardo → Petrarch's denunciation of Gherardo's intellectual and moral inertia (*otium*).
4. Petrarch falls again at least three times (like Christ's falling while going to Golgotha) with Gherardo laughing at him → perhaps the first triad of letters addressed to Gherardo in which Petrarch defends his life choice three times as poetic, philosophical and theological.
5. Petrarch sitting in the *locus amoenus* to reflect on the climb; conversion → Vaucluse versus Montrieux.
6. Petrarch urges himself on *ad beatam vitam* with the verb *compellare* → the *Fam.* X 3 is a *compellatio* in which Petrarch tries to coax Gherardo out of his monastic cell to take up his studies again.
7. The brothers simultaneously reach the Son (*Filiolus*) with the clouds below their feet, Italy in front and Provence behind (allusion to Hannibal and St Augustine) sun set → in the *Fam.* X 3, thanks to a natural course of *senectus* and his studies, Petrarch reaches Gherardo. Both are led up an *ascensus* by Christ. Hannibal anticipates the implicit comparison contained in *Fam.*, X 4 whereby Gherardo = Monicus = Polyphemus = Hannibal.
8. The Augustinian word which Petrarch chooses *not* to impart to Gherardo who is "molestus" → in the *Fam.*, XVIII 5 Petrarch sends a specially prepared copy of Augustine's *Confessions* to Gherardo.
9. Return and re-elaboration in silence/no mention of Gherardo → Petrarch's conversion in silence, separation forever from Gherardo. Cf. also the eschatocollon "solus sum" of *Fam.*, IX 2,9 and XV 2,10, and "in solitudine" of *Fam.*, X 5.

As far as the Gerardine letters are concerned, Petrarch's narrative technique can now be seen as an *a priori* device knowingly manipulative of reality and investing the resulting work on several levels. In its constant application, it reveals a precise implicit programme: to denounce Gherardo's intellectual inertia and to present Petrarch's humanism as the road towards true theology. It is a narrative technique which allows posterity to read the *Familiares* not only as books within a book, but also as sets of narrative sequences stretching out over several books within a macrostructure. It allows us to follow the very same unfolding of Petrarch's innermost mechanisms or "familiar things", and thus learn more about Petrarch himself, the first modern man.

Conclusion

In the course of this present thesis, I have primarily explored two bodies of writing by Petrarch, the *De otio religioso* and a sub-group of *Familiares*. These writings are characterised by and linked through the presence of Petrarch's brother, Gherardo. Through my analysis of the *De otio* I have discovered the emergence of several models, namely, Lucretius, Mary Magdalene and St Francis. Modern criticism unanimously agrees that Dante did not have any direct knowledge of Lucretius. Indeed, to suggest the presence of such a writer in Petrarch is also unusual, inasmuch as the current conception of the manuscript tradition of Lucretius (discussed in the Appendix) makes it difficult to establish the precise channels of transmission through which Petrarch might have gained access to the *De rerum Natura*. Nevertheless, the evidence I have produced, if nothing else, invites modern criticism not to discount the possibility of some partial reception of Lucretius, before Poggio Bracciolini's time, through an unknown manuscript tradition operating in northern Italy.

Petrarch's understanding of Lucretius, as I point out in my analysis, is based on his concept of *imitatio*. It can be discovered, therefore, only through the application of the philological method. It is also a concrete example of how Petrarch strives to achieve his *reductio ad unum* of classical and Christian letters, where such *reductio* is a fundamental characteristic of his humanism. Indeed, my analysis uncovers what would seem to be a conscious desire to align certain verses of the *Psalms* with the torments of the classical Hades. The Lucretian presence is not, however, only lexical, poetic, or a mere humanistic exercise. It also affords a philosophical framework, which I have loosely called Epicurean, in which Petrarch uses the metaphor of the Hadean torments to induce the monks of Montrieux to re-address certain issues of paramount importance, such as the real significance of

religio and *felicitas*. That is to say, it is through a Lucretian-style *cogitatio mortis*, an iconoclastic re-appraisal of certain fallacies and the courage to take on one's *fantasmata*, that the *De otio religioso* emerges from my analysis as a protreptic work. Despite its seemingly humble style and the diffuse lack of appreciation among modern critics for its apparent contents, my analysis points out how the *De otio* is polemically designed, rather, to teach Gherardo and his fellow Carthusian brethren how to cultivate Petrarchan *otium* which is truly *religiosum*. It is a work which is structured and linguistically geared to invite the monks to study, critically, their own life choices and their own particular way of worshipping God. In a word, like Cicero's *Hortensius* for Augustine, Petrarch's *De otio* is meant to arouse an interest for theological philosophy in Gherardo, who might represent western monasticism.

It is fundamentally through the *De otio religioso* that I have also contemplated the figure of Mary Magdalene as a possible model for conversion. It is clear that, according to Petrarch, the Carthusian model and, consequently, Gherardo's 'conversion', are diametrically and polemically opposed to the model of conversion provided by the Provençal-Angevin legend of Mary Magdalene. It also emerges that this female saint may have influenced Petrarch in his multifarious description of Laura. The saint also becomes a model in whom Petrarch somehow sees himself. I suggest, in fact, that it is Petrarch in the guise of Mary Magdalene who presents himself in front of the Carthusians in the explicit of the *De otio* as both the sinner about to be stoned and the Christ who orders the Jews (here the Carthusians), who had forgotten that they had ever sinned, to cast the first stone. Needless to say, the Carthusians *had* also sinned and, therefore, were not authorised to judge Petrarch alias Mary Magdalene, a fellow sinner. I also suggest that it is Petrarch in the guise of Mary Magdalene who stands amazed before the snow-white

doe of sonnet 190 which, as Christ had said to Mary outside His tomb, tells Petrarch, "Nessun mi tocchi" that is, "Noli me tangere".

The chapters on the sub-group of *Familiares* concerning Gherardo begin with the *Familiaris* IV 1, the letter to Dionigi da Borgo Sepolcro describing Petrarch's ascent of Mt Ventoux. Whether this ascent is real or only literary fiction is not important. Through my analysis, in the famous episode of the *sortes augustinianae* at the summit of the mountain, the overt Augustinian model of conversion would seem to be completed by an implicit Franciscan model. The model in question would seem to be the Bonaventurian account of St Francis's climb of La Verna to receive the stigmata. Indeed, in parallel with this Franciscan model, Petrarch's body is also pierced by thorns as he climbs with great difficulty up to the top of the Provençal mountain and Godhead. Also in parallel with St Francis, the moment of Petrarch's real conversion does not take place at the summit of the mountain, but rather *before* he reaches it. In the case of St Francis, this other place was in his tension between *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa*, that is, between mixing with people and drawing away in solitude. In the case of Petrarch, it occurs in the *locus amoenus* on the side of Mt Ventoux, a *locus amoenus* which, as Petrarch had explicitly stated in the *De otio*, perfectly coincides with the idyllic natural setting he had created for himself as a latter-day Tantalus in Vaucluse. Indeed, it is here that his thoughts "become Homerically winged" and climb to the spheres of abstract philosophy. The climb corresponds both to the climb of Mt Ventoux and to his fall into sin into the Sorgue from the height of the overhanging rock. Compared to Gherardo's 'conversion', which consisted in his stopping his climb in order to enter the Carthusian Order, Petrarchan conversion consists in ascending and descending at the same time.

I also liken the *Familiaris* IV 1 to a series of frescoes which depict and allude to an entire series of letters which constitute the sub-group I have called the 'gerardine letters'. The 'fresco cycle' paints the episodes in which Petrarch, a non-cloistered, sinning searcher of the truth strives to teach the cloistered illiterate monk about divine hermeneutics. The Petrarchan indoctrination, carried out through these letters, aims at arousing Gherardo's once discerning eye so that he may then learn, through the efforts involved in creating his own Horatian-style *callidae iuncturae*, to continue on his own (seeing that Petrarch is about to return to Italy in 1353). The model emerging is that of the humanist who teaches the cloistered monk how to draw closer to God. Petrarch does this via a *compellatio*, that is, a calling for Gherardo to open his monastic cell door to the humanistic cultivation of the intellect in the fields of ancient history, law, poetics, philosophy and theology. Such Petrarchan indoctrination constitutes an *accessus ad Augustinum*, whereby Petrarch leads Gherardo from total spiritual and intellectual exclusion from Augustine to total inclusion. Indeed, the culmination of this cycle of lessons will be Gherardo's receiving Petrarch's gift of St Augustine's *Confessions*. That is to say, whereas in the *Familiaris* IV 1, at the top of Mt Ventoux, Petrarch excludes Gherardo, via the expression "librum clausi", from his own revealing reading of the *Confessions*, at the end of the gerardine letters, Petrarch 'opens' up for him a brand-new copy of the same book. Petrarch then invites Gherardo to read it with the analytical and philological acumen he, the *preceptor*, has gradually taught Gherardo, the *discipulus* (now finally) *provectus*, to cultivate.

An overall appraisal of the present analysis of Petrarch's relationship with his brother, as it emerges from the above-mentioned works, sees the presence of several different models. These models are Lucretius, Mary Magdalene and St Francis. Even though the Augustinian paradigm in Petrarch's Weltanschauung

remains unaltered, these other models do compete with it and even improve it. As far as the first model is concerned, Lucretius, the fact that Petrarch may have been using the thoughts (and not only) of a pagan poet accused of Epicurean atheism, especially in front of a monastic community, demonstrates the strength and conviction of Petrarch's *reductio ad unum* of Christian and pre-Christian thought. If the Holy Ghost has been inspiring humanity ever since the creation of the universe, then every work from every culture and race, once suitably interpreted, may be useful, not only in advancing the Christian world, but also Christian faith. Indeed, the *reductio ad unum* of Christian and pre-Christian thought becomes an integral part of Petrarch's teaching method, where the *fil rouge* linking such multifarious thought would seem to be the desire on Petrarch's part to see Gherardo (and monasticism? humanity?) as less *otiosus*, that is, as more intellectually and humanistically active, and, consequently, more intimately Christian.

It is in this light that the evidence produced in my analysis of the *De otio religioso* and the *Familiares* demands that modern criticism should now re-formulate its judgement of the two works. It is obvious that they are not, respectively, "uninspired praise of monasticism" and a "simple collection of letters". Indeed, the *De otio* vigorously works *against* the contemporary, accepted meaning of *otium religiosum*, and the *Familiares* can now be read, at least as far as the 'gerardine letters' are concerned, as a re-elaborated, rhetorically conceived, and highly structured work of pragmatic humanistic literature in the *form* of letters.

To succinctly summarise the relationship between the two Petracchi brothers, Petrarch's *Testamentum* and the melancholic *Senilis* XV 5 clearly point out that he never stops loving Gherardo, inasmuch as he is, after all, his brother and closest relative. I am sure that this Gherardo, the person *in carne e ossa*, remained in Petrarch's eyes as the lowly, unassuming monk who, from time to time, really

did occasion compunction in his big brother, the humanist. However, as with so many other aspects of his life, in his older age Petrarch re-writes, re-addresses and re-interprets the biographical and historical 'facts' in order to re-present them as a part of the idealisation process of his own life as *homo exemplaris*. It is in this process of ideological *riscrittura* that Gherardo, above and beyond the biographical markers which necessarily demarcate the biographical narrative, also becomes a *figura* in the Mary-Martha sense I outlined in the Introduction. Gherardo is, therefore, also a symbol of the 'other' way. Gherardo represents the religious alternative to Petrarch's own life choice. In a word, Petrarch's rhetorical use of Gherardo almost as a character (or *agens* as is used in Dante studies) in his idealised autobiography, on the one hand, and his creation of the contrast between them, on the other, are literary constructs based on the concept of mediaeval *exemplaritas*. It was through such *exemplaritas* that Petrarch thought he could teach (*docere*) humanity about a certain new (but, in actual fact, ancient) road to God.

The contrast has an ideological and gnoseological nature, where two different ways of searching for God enter into conflict. This conflict mainly derives from the fact that Gherardo's choice enjoys the favour and authority of tradition and social recognition, whereas Petrarch's does not (the role of the humanist patronised by a strong political leader is yet to be born). Gherardo's choice is also much easier, whereas Petrarch's choice is extremely more difficult and, as such, becomes extremely elitist. Whereas the first life choice is basically static, the second is necessarily dynamic, both intellectually and geographically, hence the constant idea of pilgrimage. Petrarch's allusion to Gherardo's 'death' like that of Ulysses' companions, for example, is, therefore, to be interpreted metaphorically as a stopping, a *statio*, as Seneca would say, on, or a deviation from, the road to true salvation. The negative sign which Petrarch attributes to Gherardo, the literary

exemplum or character, authorises us in turn to compare Gherardo to Lot, Remus, Abel and, perhaps, even Gherardo Segalelli.

I believe that, in summarising the relationship between the Petracchi brothers, Petrarch's own use of the Ovidian myth of Byblis is the most eloquent. Byblis, as an allusion to the Book, whether this be Augustine's *Confessions* or Petrarch's own works, is a remarkably powerful classical metaphor for the Petrarchan metamorphosis of 'the love of readers for books' into 'the love of a book for its potential future reader'. The Book desperately searches for its own reader, but seeing that it fears that the reader will not accept it for what it is and for the form it has, it constantly re-writes itself. Petrarch could not have represented more eloquently the constant re-writing throughout his entire life of his own works, whether in Latin or the vernacular. Petrarch may be the humanist who would presume to teach western monasticism and posterity about a road to salvation through confession. Byblis, however, is Petrarch who re-presents himself time and time again to the same audience and who fears that non-acceptance might mean his own death not only as a *preceptor*, but also as a book to be read.

APPENDIX

The 'mysterious' Lucretian manuscript tradition

The question arises as to how Petrarch could have possibly consulted Lucretius's poem on nature approximately seventy years before its official re-discovery in St Gallen by Poggio Bracciolini in 1417. To attempt to answer this question, it is necessary to make some preliminary considerations concerning Lucretius and the manuscript tradition.

Lucretius thought that the entire cosmos, including the soul, was made up of atoms. These atoms were then dispersed at death. The soul, therefore, was mortal. Despite this atomic theory of the cosmos, Lucretius's *De rerum natura libri* VI continued to be widely read after the Advent of Christianity. Christian writers, such as Tertullian and Lactantius, could not simply ignore the almost unanimous praise given to this Epicurean poet by the cream of the Golden and Silver Age of *Latinitas*, such as Cicero, Cornelius Nepos, Virgil, Horace, Ovid, Vitruvius, Quintilian and Statius.[1297] During the fashion for archaism in the second century, Lucretius was considered and celebrated on equal terms with Ennius.[1298] Lactantius and Arnobius extracted certain words and even entire expressions from Lucretius in their philosophical battles against the pagan religion, thereby implicitly promoting the idea of Lucretius the iconoclastic euhemerist in support of the Christian faith. Despite this, St Jerome points out that by the fourth century, Lucretius was definitely no longer mentioned in philosophical discussion. Lucretius became progressively known only for his atomic theory, which was obviously incompatible with the Christian dogma on the immortality of the soul. This was probably the original cause for the invention of a legend, recorded by St Jerome, that Lucretius

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[1297] Corn. Nep., *Att.*, 12, 4; Ov., *am.*, 1, 15, 23 and *trist.*, 2, 261; Vitr., 9, 17; Quint., *inst.*, 10, 1, 87; Stat., *silv.*, 2, 7, 76.
[1298] Fronto *ad M. Caesarem*, 4, 3, 2; *ad M. Antonium imper.*, 3, 1, 3; Gell., 1, 21, 5 & ff.

had always lived on the brink of madness caused or aggravated by a love potion. Lucretius was believed to have committed suicide at the age of forty after having composed his poem in brief intervals of lucidity at night.[1299] Given the times in which Lucretius lived, this legend is not implausible. Let us hasten to say, however, that it is also obviously tendentious, otherwise Tertullian, Arnobius and Lactantius would definitely have used it to confute the atheistic ideas of a suicide victim.[1300] *De rerum natura* became progressively relegated to the close confines of analytical rhetoric, grammar and lexicography, and Lucretius was almost entirely forgotten.[1301]

It was the *Schola Palatina*, alluded to earlier, which rescued the Lucretian text from oblivion. In the ninth century certain Anglo-Saxon or Irish intellectuals based in Laon, and connected to the Carolingian *Schola Palatina*, started copying and re-examining *De rerum natura*.[1302] This is where and why the famous "oblongus" manuscript of Lucretius's *De rerum natura* originated in insular script. As I pointed out above,[1303] it was these scholars who found the terminological and philosophical precedent of Theotokos in the Lucretian concept of *Voluptas*.

Specifically regarding the manuscript tradition, Reeve[1304] points out that in the ninth century Lucretius existed in catalogues at Murbach and Bobbio. Excerpts appeared at St Gallen and elsewhere, as did *schedae.* The Q manuscript was effectively used in the eleventh century at St Bertin and in the twelfth century

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[1299] Hier., *chron.*, 171.

[1300] Even though it is tempting to hypothesize that Virgil was conscious of this detail when he has Dido "drink" the long love which induces her suicide, *Aen.*, 1, 749, "infelix Dido longumque bibebat amorem". This will become the more explicit "mortal poison" in the XII century *Roman d'Eneas*, vv. 811, 1258-1259, 2105-2108 and will continue to Flaubert's Emma Bovary who dies of poison, III,VIII. Cf. Privitera, 1996.

[1301] Canali, 1988, pp.10-12, 22-23. See also Martin, 1957, p.xvi.

[1302] For the ms. now in Leiden (*Leiden Voss. Lat. F. 30* (*O*), see Martin, 1957, p.iii and Petroff, 1996; cf. Herren, 1998, pp.197-98.

[1303] See p. 90, n. 353.

[1304] Reeve, 1980, pp.39-42.

Corbie owned another complete manuscript. Certain studies[1305] have hypothesised that *De rerum natura* was being read directly at the beginning of the fourteenth century.[1306] Despite Brugnoli's assertion that Lucretius was "comunque ignoto a Dante",[1307] Boyde, however, states that Dante might have known the odd line from Lucretius which could be found in the Latin grammarians and Church Fathers. According to Brugnoli and Boyde, Lucretius the poet and philosopher could not have had any direct influence on Dante.[1308]

Petrarch, however, was in a different position to Dante. He was able to take advantage of the Holy See's new attitude towards humanistic studies. Not only Paris, but also Avignon (together with Toulouse and Montpellier) had become an international centre between Northern and Southern Europe, where scholars were often invited to give lectures on selected topics not normally part of scholastic curricula. A case in point is Nicolas Trevet who came from Oxford specifically to comment on Seneca's tragedies and Livy for the cardinals and the pope. It was in Avignon that by 1329 Petrarch had become the proud owner of the most complete and best copy of Livy known for centuries. Landolfo Colonna in 1328 had brought it for him from the Cathedral of Chartres where he was canon. This copy of Livy was integrated, corrected and annotated by Petrarch. The following century the same copy would be acquired by Lorenzo Valla. The manuscript tradition of Pomponius Mela or Propertius, for instance, came through similar channels. In short, thanks to the channel of the Po valley and Avignon, the young Petrarch

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[1305] Guido Billanovich, 1958, pp. 155-243; Hemmerdinger, 1968, p.741; Gasparotto, 1967-8; Gasparotto, 1968, p.32; Reynolds, 1987, pp.131-7.

[1306] Analogously it seems that also Silius Italicus was read by Petrarch before its official humanistic re-discovery by Poggio; for the hypothesis of "una circolazione di Silio che travalichi i Tabou della scoperta umanistica", see Brugnoli-Santini, 1995, p.98.

[1307] Brugnoli, 1998, pp.68 & 72-73.

[1308] Boyde, 1981, p.3. We cannot exclude, however, that Dante may have been influenced by the Lucretian denunciation of the sacrifice of Iphigenia (Lucr., 1, 85) in his own judgement of Agamemnon's vow to the gods in *Par.*, V 69-72.

becomes a privileged link in the process of transmission between classical Latin antiquity and the Renaissance.

Obviously the cultural revolution in course here was one of a highly valued elitist fashion. The fourteenth century had a more secular character than the preceding centuries. This was due to the increasingly autonomous nature of both the many universities and the city-states. Texts which had hitherto been considered officially as taboo became slightly more accessible to a certain elite. This elite, however, was not emancipated enough from ecclesiastical restrictions to be able to admit in writing that authors such as Lucretius were being read and discussed openly. The case of Petrarch is thus emblematic. This leading intellectual demonstrates a familiarity with Lucretius which cannot be explained purely by recourse to Servius, Macrobius or Virgil, and yet he very rarely mentions him explicitly. Though Petrarch does mention Lucretius by name in the *Familiaris* on the law of imitation,[1309] he does not include him in the list of his favourite authors in the Parisian manuscript lat. 2201.[1310] The *De otio*, however, comes to our aid. Here Petrarch defines King David's *Psalms* as a *religiosior sermo*, that is, "more fitting to the Christian faith" than any work by Virgil.[1311] A long mediaeval tradition including Dante had reverently regarded Virgil as "almost Christian" and even responsible for the conversion of others such as Statius. Virgil's works could hardly, therefore, be considered *non religiosa* for Christian contemplation. We must conclude that, compared to David, Virgil was "less fitting" in a letter sent to Carthusian monks. Directly quoting Lucretius would not only have been "even less fitting", but perhaps even offensive. In works meant for wide diffusion, especially

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[1309] *Fam.*, XXII 2.
[1310] Reynolds, 1987, p.138.
[1311] *De otio*, p.722.

among monks, it is obviously still not safe or *religiosum* to explicitly mention the *De rerum natura*.

Together with the Holy See's new attitude towards humanistic studies, Petrarch could also draw on Paduan pre-humanism. Reynolds locates the beginnings of humanism in a "small literary coterie which grew up in Padua in the second half of the thirteenth century."[1312] The leader of these pre-humanists, a Paduan judge, Lovato Lovati (1241-1309) found numerous sources in the monastery of Pomposa in the Po delta, and in the Chapter Library at Verona.[1313] Thanks to these sources, he "knew Lucretius and Valerius Flaccus a century and a half before they were discovered by Poggio, and was making use of Catullus almost fifty years before the traditional date of his resurrection in Verona. [Such use of classical sources was] unprecedented since antiquity and [would not be] equalled again until the fifteenth-century."[1314] Albertino Mussato, also of Padua (1262-1329), emulated Lovati by reading the same Latin authors. Benvenuto Campesani of Vicenza (1255-1323) writes his famous epigram to celebrate the return of Catullus to Verona. Indeed, this last city develops even further the pre-humanism begun by Lovati in Padua. Alas much of this wealth of the libraries in the Po Valley mysteriously disappeared, although some similar texts did turn up later in Switzerland, France and Germany. The legacy of the great Po Valley pre-humanists to fourteenth and fifteenth century scholars such as Petrarch, Boccaccio, Coluccio Salutati, Valla and Politian was of inestimable value.

Such a legacy might help to explain a certain fifteenth-century mystery. In his *Nutricia*, Politian agrees with Petrarch that Lucretius had actually committed suicide by falling on a sword, rather than taking poison, thus performing a heroic

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[1312] Reynolds, 1987, p.102.
[1313] *ibid.*, p.104.
[1314] *ibid.*, p.103.

and dignified Roman act.[1315] The link between Petrarch and Politian does not, however, stop here. Politian realises that there are several errors in the manuscript tradition of *De rerum natura*. While collating the official descendant of Poggio Bracciolini's copy with his own, he found a discrepancy: Poggio's copy had the *lectio* "permaneant" in book 1 line 122, whereas his own had "permanent". Seeing that he realises that the verb *permanare* (meaning 'to filter' or 'to penetrate') is part of Lucretius's *modus scribendi*, he considers it to be more correct. Scribes had obviously found it to be the *lectio difficilior* and had consequently eliminated it. Pizzani[1316] points out that this *lectio difficilior* is extant in the original *Oblongus* manuscript from Laon but *not* in the copy which Poggio Bracciolini had found in Switzerland. This means that Politian's copy of *De rerum natura* did not descend from Poggio's copy, but rather from a different, older and substantially more correct branch of the manuscript tradition. Pizzani seems to suggest that Politian's copy, which is no longer extant today, had been available in Italy even before Politian's time, possibly even in Petrarch's. Had it come directly from Laon to the Po Valley and Lovati's private library? Had Petrarch been able to see this copy? Pizzani defines the whole question an "inquietante mistero". Petrarch seems to have been a part of this Italian "mistero" for which, I feel, there will never be any definite solution.

[1315] *Nutricia* 487-91, "Nec philtra bibit nimioque insanus amore/ mox ferro incubuit", cf. Petrarch *De rem.* II, 121, "Lucretius vestrorum vatum primo proximius, cui tam multa Vergilium auferre non puduit, amatorio poculo accepto, in morbum rabiemque compulsus, gladio ad postremum pro remedio usus est"; for a complete discussion and bibliography concerning the legendary death of Lucretius, see Pizzani, 1996, pp.343-355.

[1316] Pizzani, 1996, p.352.

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